Fab Lab Hub, LLC Receives America Makes Contract to Create Additive Manufacturing Digital Badge Partnership

Digital Badges are an expansion of learning options for the New Collar Workforce who must navigate disruptive technologies like 3D Printing being introduced to industry through digital transformation. The micro-credentials also provide a pathway to two and four-year degrees for post-secondary students, as well as for anyone looking to change careers.

SANTA FE, N.M. (PRWEB) February 25, 2019 -- Fab Lab Hub, LLC, a part of the international Fab Lab Network, has been contracted by America Makes, the National Additive Manufacturing Innovation Institute, driven by the National Center for Defense Manufacturing and Machining (NCDMM) as part of a partnership to expand opportunities for careers in the 3D Printing industry.

The $70,000 award will be used to create digital badges that prepare operators and technicians to use and service Fused Deposition Modeling (FDM) and Stereolithography (SLA) 3D Printers. Digital Badges are secure skill verifications based on the OpenBadge platform developed by Mozilla that are gaining in popularity at educational institutions and corporations.

“America Makes understands that the 3D printing industry is dependent upon having skilled operators and technicians, necessary for successful equipment deployment,” explains America Makes Executive Director Rob Gorham. “We are committed to advancing education in the 3D Printing space and have initiated a number of partnerships to reach our goals for supporting our members’ workforce needs at all levels of the organization.”

Fab Lab Hub founder and CEO Sarah Boisvert says she was particularly interested in the digital badge format as it links directly back to employer needs. “In my research for The New Collar Workforce book 95% of manufacturers said they were looking for employees with strong problem-solving skills above all other capabilities. The Digital Badge platform allows us to document problem solving used in the required project via a portfolio that contains photos, video and essays. It’s an in-depth record of the critical thinking process beyond passing a test.”

Fab Lab Hub expects that the unique features inherent in digital badges can create public awareness of engaging New Collar jobs and spark an interest in all manufacturing careers. While digital badges prepare students for the 21st century workplace, they can also provide a pathway to a college degree or other post-secondary certification program. Badges allow participants to try out a field of study in an affordable, short term, hands-on, flexible format that can be accessed both in class or outside traditional educational institutions in alternative settings.

In addition, with exponential changes in technology and rapid addition of new machines like 3D printers to the factory floor, badges can be earned to provide a worker who may already have a degree with more current skills for today’s workplace. Badges range in duration from 4 to 8 weeks, and average cost is $250 with lab fees in the $50 - $100 range. Badges will be stacked into Master Badges for FDM and SLA operators and technicians, respectively.

Through this new partnership, a group of 10 Fab Labs and educational institutions where the hands-on portion of the digital badge pilot project will take place have formed the North American Digital Fabrication Alliance to issue the badges. These include facilities in Detroit, Cleveland, Baltimore, Boston, Pittsburgh, Tulsa, Denver,
Santa Fe [NM], Oakland and El Paso. This initial pilot will test the Additive Manufacturing Digital Badge program ahead of availability to the national network of approximately 250 fab labs in North America as well as access through post-secondary institutions, K-12 systems and other education partners within the America Makes and DigiFab Alliance networks.

About America Makes
America Makes is the National Additive Manufacturing Innovation Institute. As the national accelerator for additive manufacturing (AM), America Makes is the nation’s leading and collaborative partner in AM and 3DP technology research, discovery, creation, and innovation. Structured as a public-private partnership with member organizations from industry, academia, government, non-government agencies, and workforce and economic development resources, we are working together to innovate and accelerate AM to increase our nation’s global manufacturing competitiveness. Based in Youngstown, Ohio, America Makes is the first Institute within the Manufacturing USA infrastructure and is driven by the National Center for Defense Manufacturing and Machining (NCDMM). For more information about America Makes, visit americamakes.us.

About NCDMM
NCDMM delivers innovative and collaborative manufacturing solutions that enhance our nation’s workforce and economic competitiveness. NCDMM has extensive knowledge and depth in manufacturing areas—both commercial and defense—continually innovate, improve, and advance manufacturing technologies and methodologies. Our experienced team specializes in identifying the needs, the players, the technologies, and processes to attain optimal solutions for our customers. We connect the dots. That’s the NCDMM methodology. NCDMM also manages the national accelerator for additive manufacturing (AM) and 3DP printing (3DP), America Makes and the V4 Institute. For additional information, visit the NCDMM at ncdmm.org.

About Fab Lab Hub, LLC
Fab Lab Hub, LLC was founded in 2010 to innovate learning opportunities for the New Collar workforce. The company is a recognized organization in the International Fab Lab network founded at MIT’s Center for Bits and Atoms in Cambridge, MA and operates two Fab Labs dedicated to lifelong workplace learning and entrepreneurship in Santa Fe, NM. More information is available at fablabhub.org.

Fab Lab Hub is a founding member of the North American Digital Fabrication Alliance that issues Digital Badges for New Collar skills such as operating 3D Printers, designing in CAD, and servicing robotics. The annual meeting of the group, DigiFabCon, is in its 9th year and explores how digital tools are changing the world. More information is available at NewCollarNetwork.com.

Founder Sarah Boisvert has over 30 years experience in the design, development and sales of ultraviolet lasers, laser machine tools and contract manufacturing services. She is the author of The New Collar Workforce published by Photonics Media Press that has received critical acclaim from photonics and manufacturing industry leaders.
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