



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Austin Polytechnical Academy Wins Grant to Develop Champions at Work
SkillsUSA awards inaugural Champions for Change grant to local school

CHICAGO – Austin Polytechnical Academy, a new high school dedicated to careers in modern manufacturing, is one of two schools nationwide selected by Champions for Change, a SkillsUSA initiative, to receive a grant to help students develop skills and connect with employers.

The high school, a project of the Chicago Manufacturing Renaissance Council, a coalition of labor, business, government, education and community leaders committed to making Illinois a world leader in high-skilled, high-performance manufacturing, was designed specifically to address the shortage of skilled workers in the industry.

“Our students face more and more challenges in finding work they enjoy, and this grant gives students the opportunity to explore their passions and improve skills,” said Matt Hancock, lead research assistant for the Center for Labor and Community Research, the financial trust for Austin Polytech. “At the same time, the Greater Chicago area will benefit from a talent pool that is more prepared for and passionate about the job.”

Austin Polytechnical Academy will use the \$91,000 grant over three years to implement technical skills training and leadership development. The school opened Sept. 4 in the former Austin High School building on Chicago’s West Side with 145 freshmen. Twenty-four local manufacturing companies have partnered with the school to provide mentoring, internships and other resources for students.

“SkillsUSA provides students unparalleled opportunities because of our industry partnerships, both locally and nationwide,” said Tim Lawrence, executive director of SkillsUSA. “We are excited to see the success of Austin Polytech students and the communities it reaches.”

In addition to technical skills training and internship opportunities, the grant will enable students to document their proficiency through Skill Connect Assessments. Four additional pilot sites will be selected in 2008. For more information, visit www.championsforchange.org.

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Champions for Change is supported by a grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation and supports workforce development in vulnerable communities nationwide. SkillsUSA is a partnership of students, teachers and industry leaders working together to ensure America has a skilled workforce. SkillsUSA serves more than 285,000 students and instructors annually and has served more than 9 million members since its founding in 1965. The organization has 15,000 member classrooms in 54 states and territorial associations. More than 14,500 instructors and administrators are professional members of SkillsUSA.

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