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NEW REPORT: LARGEST PORTION OF JOB OPENINGS PROJECTED FOR NEW YORK BY 2018 IN “MIDDLE-SKILL” SECTOR

New York’s Economic Recovery Tied to Preparing Workers for Jobs Requiring More than High School Diploma, Less Than a Four-Year Degree; New York Must Invest in Training Time Now To Meet Future Demand

Business, Labor, Education Leaders Launch New Skills2Compete-New York Campaign

NEW YORK CITY—Nearly one million “middle-skill” job openings—positions that require more than a high school diploma, but less than a four-year degree—are projected for the state by 2018, concludes a new study released today by National Skills Coalition in partnership with the New York City Department of Small Business Services and the New York Association of Training and Employment Professionals. But to reap the full economic benefits of these openings, New York will need to expand investment in proper training and education for its workforce to make sure residents are ready for those jobs.

Though the recession has slowed current employment growth, the report projects that middle-skill jobs (including new jobs and replacement) would account for nearly 40 percent of all openings between 2008 and 2018.

“The advanced manufacturing sector is growing, and demand will remain high for ready and qualified employees,” says Mike Mandina, President of Optimax Systems, Inc. and Chair of the Finger Lakes Advanced Manufacturers’ Enterprise (FAME). “As US firms adopt lean principles in order to compete in the global market space we require a workforce with a significantly higher skill set than for manufacturing jobs of the past. This past year, Optimax hired 20 employees, most for positions that require technical training, but not a four-year degree. Precision optics manufacturing jobs reward skilled workers with high pay, benefits and career growth. Workforce programs like FAME help companies build a strong pipeline of skilled workers that will drive wealth creation and a strong economy for our region.”

Despite New York’s significant investments in postsecondary education and workforce training, the state is at serious risk of a “middle-skills gap.” And at the national level, proposals in Congress threaten to dismantle the state’s public workforce system.

Prior to the national recession, New York was already experiencing shortages of middle-skill workers in crucial industries. About 46 percent of all current jobs are classified as middle-skill, but only 39 percent of New York workers have the credentials to fill them. As New York moves from recession into recovery, employers will likely once again face the challenge of finding quality middle- and high-skill workers – slowing the pace of economic growth.

The report, which tracks New York’s jobs at the middle-skill level, notes that as the economy picks up, the state is projected to see growth in these kinds of jobs.

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"Our skills vision is a simple one: we need to fill high demand high wage jobs for businesses to thrive, and workers need the skills to increase their earnings," says John Twomey, Executive Director of the New York Association of Training and Employment Professionals. "As New York looks to remain a strong competitor in the global economy, it's critical that we align our workforce and education resources with current and projected labor market demand. Investments in programs to train New Yorkers who are laid off or working in low-wage jobs for well-paying, more plentiful middle-skill jobs will generate more public revenue and stronger communities."

New York's Forgotten Middle-Skills Jobs also assesses the current and future middle-skill employment and education patterns in the state:

- **New York's healthcare and transportation sectors, two important sectors in the state's economy, show robust demand for middle-skill workers.** Occupations within the transportation sector, including air, truck and passenger transit jobs, are expected to experience large numbers of job openings due to a high percentage of workers close to retirement. Additionally, as the economy recovers, there is potential for a bigger gap between the supply and demand of many types of health care professionals with middle-skills training.
- Middle-skill jobs expected to grow by 2018 in New York include **dental hygienists, with median annual earnings of \$65,160; electricians, with median annual earnings of \$61,430; and aircraft mechanics with median annual earnings of \$56,900.** The report includes a list of 30 middle-skill jobs that New York can't live without.
- **New York workers face challenges when it comes to having even the basic skills.** Of the over 12 million working age adults in New York, close to 14 percent have not completed high school or its equivalent. Less than 10 percent of New York adults with less than a high school diploma are enrolled in adult basic education, and state-run English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs serve only about 5 percent of the estimated need in the state.

The report also finds that nearly two-thirds of the people who will be in New York's workforce in the year 2025 were already working in 2010—long past the traditional high school-to-college pipeline. This underscores the need for New York to bolster investment in training and education to people who are working or who could be working today.

"If New York seeks timely economic recovery and long-term prosperity, the state must ensure that its workforce has the necessary education and training to meet the labor demands of the future," urges Eric Seleznow of National Skills Coalition, the convening organization for the national Skills2Compete campaign. "This moment provides an opportunity for businesses and the state to be strategic, evaluate labor and skill needs, and train and prepare for the jobs that are expected to grow."

Echoing a vision put forward by the national Skills2Compete campaign, President Obama first challenged every American to commit to at least one year of postsecondary education or training in February 2009, "be it at a technical college or a four-year school; vocational training or an apprenticeship"—is a priority for his Administration. Despite this commitment, the President proposed an 8 percent reduction in federal support for workforce training in his 2012 budget proposal. The most recent Continuing Resolution considered by Congress proposes a 100 percent cut to job training funds beginning July 1, 2011. These cuts couldn't come at a worse time for many Americans seeking job training, access to education and opportunities to return to work.

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In partnership with a broad coalition of business, labor and education leaders, the Skills2Compete-New York Campaign is calling on state leaders to embrace a strong vision to guide an economic and education strategy that would allow residents to meet or exceed the President's challenge: Every New York resident should have access to the equivalent of at least two years of education or training past high school—leading to a vocational credential, industry certification, or one's first two years of college—to be pursued at whatever point and pace makes sense for individual workers and industries. Every person must also have access to the basic skills needed to pursue such education.

“As the economy recovers and grows in new directions, regional employers will need many workers with ‘middle skills’ and industry certifications,” said Dr. Anne M. Kress, President of Monroe Community College. “In fact, community college students are finding jobs in industries like health care, optics and other technologies because they have these ‘middle skills’—a new term describing skills acquired through two-year training and education programs. Community colleges play a central role in developing these skills and we are hopeful that this report will encourage a statewide conversation on how we can provide more of this kind of training that is so critical to our economic development.”

The analysis for the study was performed by National Skills Coalition using data from the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, American Community Survey and state labor market data from the New York State Department of Labor. The analysis is based on the methodology developed for the national Skills2Compete report, America's *Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs*, by labor economists Harry Holzer and Robert Lerman, released in 2007.

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About Skills2Compete

Skills2Compete is a non-partisan campaign to ensure the U.S. workforce has the skills needed to meet business demand, foster innovation, and grow broadly shared prosperity. The campaign's diverse and growing list of endorsers include national and local leaders from business, labor, education and training, community and civil rights groups, and the public sector. The Skills2Compete Vision: Every U.S. worker should have access to the equivalent of at least two years of education or training past high school—leading to a vocational credential, industry certification, or one's first two years of college—to be pursued at whatever point and pace makes sense for individual workers and industries. Every person must also have the opportunity to obtain the basic skills needed to pursue such education. For more information and to download the full report, *New York's Forgotten Middle Skills Jobs*, visit www.nationalskillscoalition.org/Skills2Compete and www.nationalskillscoalition.org/NewYork.

National Skills Coalition organizes broad-based coalitions seeking to raise the skills of America's workers across a range of industries. We advocate for public policies that invest in what works, as informed by our members' real-world expertise. And we communicate these goals to an American public seeking a vision for a strong U.S. economy that allows everyone to be part of its success. For more information, visit www.nationalskillscoalition.org.