

Coventry University joins forces with Unipart to create new Engineering and Manufacturing Institute

Coventry University and the Unipart Group have joined forces to develop a new Engineering and Manufacturing Institute on Unipart's manufacturing site in Coventry.

The £32million project will see the creation of an international centre of engineering and manufacturing excellence, which will be the base for a sustained programme of innovative teaching and learning, product development and research activity.

The project, which has been awarded £7.9million from the Higher Education Funding Council for England's [Catalyst Fund](#), is part of a national government initiative which is supporting innovative programmes designed to boost the economy.

Unipart themselves are contributing £17.9 million towards the creation of the new facility with a further £5.6 million towards student scholarships and product research and development, and including support for the new undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in manufacturing and the advanced engineering and management programmes that will emerge as a result of the initiative.

This exciting, collaborative project establishes a new and innovative teaching environment that will create a step change in the higher education model for manufacturing engineering degree courses through enhanced activity-led learning.

The announcement comes during the Government's Make Your Future Happen: Discover Higher Education week, a national campaign running between 12 and 18 October to increase awareness of the value of higher education.

David Willetts, the Universities Minister, said:

"This is an innovative and exciting project. Coventry University students learning on Unipart's factory floor will gain technical skills that are highly valued by employers and help the UK in the global race."

The facility will accommodate new undergraduate, postgraduate and low carbon R&D programmes; creating a 'faculty on the factory floor' and allowing students the opportunity to be connected directly to the latest technology on the manufacturing front line.

Its aim is to develop the next generation of highly skilled, specialist engineers and operational leaders needed for the UK's high-value manufacturing sector. This will be achieved by providing students with direct access to Unipart's operations, allowing them to work on 'live' issues in a real world manufacturing production environment.

Research and testing, carried out in partnership between the University and Unipart, alongside customers and suppliers, is also intended to stimulate new product and process development. Coventry University's Engineering and Computing Building will form an integral part of the delivery of the activity with students spending time in both facilities.

The project directly supports the Heseltine Review, the UK Industrial Strategy, and the demand for higher-level STEM skills across the UK economy. It also strongly supports the Coventry and Warwickshire LEP priority for 5,000 new or up-skilled engineers by 2015 and the priority to increase the number of SMEs in the advanced manufacturing engineering sector that are active in R&D to 25%.

Professor Madeleine Atkins, Vice-chancellor of Coventry University said:

“Collaborative partnerships between universities and businesses are critical in promoting innovation and supporting the UK’s economic recovery, so we’re delighted to be working with Unipart to create an unprecedented ‘live’ industry learning environment to attract more young engineers and upskill current workforces.

“This joint project, which combines academic research skills with commercial expertise, is testimony to our strong focus on employability and underpins our long-term aim of producing industry-ready graduates who have the necessary skills, knowledge and expertise to meet the demands of our economy.

“We will also be developing cutting edge research and development programmes between the University and Unipart to exploit the expertise of both partners and to roadmap future technologies. Our aim is to establish our new Engineering and Manufacturing Institute as a benchmark for how the higher education sector can work successfully with business in the UK.”

Carol Burke, Managing Director of Unipart Manufacturing Group, said:

“Unipart Manufacturing enjoys a close working relationship with Coventry University as we share many of the same passions, including increasing the number and calibre of engineers and associated skills in the Coventry and Warwickshire area, as well as researching and supporting high value manufacturing and engineering. This partnership is therefore a key element of our own growth profile in high value manufacturing.

“This exciting project gives us the opportunity to support Coventry University in the development of new and innovative ways to train the engineers of the future, giving them real, industry-relevant projects and experience in a live manufacturing environment.”

Steve Egan, HEFCE Interim Chief Executive, said:

“Coventry University’s teaching and research expertise combined with the manufacturing and design skills of Unipart will create a new institute which will make a significant impact on manufacturing in the region and nationally. We are delighted to make a contribution to this

exciting joint venture through the HEFCE Catalyst fund which will stimulate the economy and drive excellence in manufacturing.”

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Notes to editors

Image: Universities Minister David Willetts on a visit to Coventry University earlier this year.

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