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A Challenge to Students to Reach New Heights

In her commencement speech, "The Value of Higher Education to You and to Our Nation," on May 3 to the graduating class of 2013 at [Colorado Mountain College \(CMC\)](#), OVAE Assistant Secretary Brenda Dann-Messier emphasized the accomplishments of the college. "It is really impressive that out of 800 community colleges, CNN Money ranked you as number 17 for student success! And you are rated #1 among Colorado's two-year colleges for graduation plus transfer rates!" She went on to challenge the new graduates to accomplish more by seizing opportunities and taking on upcoming challenges so they each reach their full potential. Dann-Messier noted that, ultimately, facing the future was an individual matter that would be influenced significantly by their CMC educational experiences. Her concluding request to the graduates was to "... reach out to your brothers and sisters and to your friends who may be struggling, who may not be as prepared as you are, and are wondering if they can ever graduate from college. I want you to let them know that YES, they can. Each one of you is a role model; each one of you already has made a huge difference to your families, your friends, and your community; and each one of you is an inspiration to me."



OVAE Welcomes Helen Pajcic

Helen Pajcic recently moved to OVAE from the White House, where she was a member of the Obama administration. At OVAE she serves as the special assistant for higher education policy. Through this work she aspires to ensure nontraditional students and disconnected youths have equal access to high-quality education and training opportunities.

During her time at the White House, Pajcic worked at the Domestic Policy Council, where she focused on evidence-based policy, financing tools, and public-private partnerships to improve outcomes in social programs. She also co-led the effort on President Obama's Summer Jobs+ initiative, an opportunity to provide employment opportunities to low-income and disconnected youths.

Before joining the administration, Pajcic served as an education policy advisor to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor. While at the committee, she worked on the passage of student financial aid reform and the Keeping All Student Safe Act, which passed the House in 2011. She served as policy advisor to committee chairman George Miller on his concussion safety for youth initiative, which included the introduction of the Protecting Student Athletes from Concussions Act of 2010. Pajcic next focused on efforts to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, with primary responsibility for charter school policy and public school choice.

Pajcic's interest in education, politics, and social justice began early in life. At Princeton University, she wrote her thesis on the federal role in afterschool policy. While still in college, she also had the opportunity to travel the country working fulltime as press advance for the Obama campaign. She graduated with a bachelor's degree from Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs in 2009. She is from Jacksonville, Fla. and roots for Florida State University—her mother's alma mater and where her Uncle Gary played quarterback.

Society of Manufacturing Engineers Seeks to Boost CTE

In his State of the Union message this year, President Obama stated, "Our first priority is making America a magnet for new jobs and manufacturing." This priority coincides with significant work being done by a professional association, the [Society of Manufacturing Engineers \(SME\)](#), which has been innovating new ways to motivate students to pursue careers in advanced manufacturing and to deliver quality CTE curricula.

In an effort to showcase the appeal of modern manufacturing—an industry that is worlds away from the "dirty, dangerous, and dull" factories of the past century—SME sponsored an inspiring video, [The Edge Factor: Metal & Flesh](#). The resulting show, The Edge Factor, shares stories of innovative manufacturing teams working together to design and build life-changing products. The resulting film, Metal & Flesh, premiered this past month at events across North America to thousands of students, educators, and industry leaders.

On the curricular side, SME offers over 400 online classes in manufacturing through its training website, [Tooling U](#). Currently, the site is embedded into hundreds of secondary and postsecondary programs across North America. The Tooling U training classes used in these schools are the same classes used by thousands of North American manufacturing companies to train their employees. Visit www.toolingu.com/education/ to learn about secondary and postsecondary course materials, used by many institutions to "flip the classroom"—a style of teaching where students receive direct instruction at their own paces using technology and use classroom time for problem solving with their instructors.

In a forthcoming [report](#) on a recent survey conducted in partnership with Training Magazine and Brandon Hall Group, a research analyst organization, SME revealed important information about the skills gap that is holding back the manufacturing sector. The survey found that 88 percent of the manufacturing companies surveyed struggle to find skilled workers. Sixty-five percent cited the lack of skilled workers as negatively impacting their ability to grow. Helping to meet President Obama's call, SME is demonstrating that manufacturing is an attractive career and helping CTE students get ready to fill today's high-skill technical jobs.

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