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Futuristic 3D printing, SmartGrid training considered for Cabarrus technology center (PHOTOS)

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A group studying what should be included in a planned \$9 million **Rowan-Cabarrus Community College** technology training center is coming up with some futurist stuff.

Among the subjects that could be taught at the Advanced Technology Center are 3D digital design, additive manufacturing, SmartGrid technology and alternative-energy subjects, says [J. Craig McAtee](#), executive director of the National Coalition of Advanced Technology Centers. The NCATC, based in Cleveland, Ohio, is consulting with the RCCC on planning the center, which was approved by Cabarrus voters in a November referendum.

Mechatronics is a must for the new center, he adds. The training program combines elements of electronics, hydraulics, programmable controls and pneumatics to train graduates who can troubleshoot and repair today's advanced-manufacturing machines.

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McAtee's team spent a lot of time talking with employers about what skills the future work force needs, he says.

"We want you to have the best advanced-technology center in the country," McAtee says. "Industry input all along the way is emphatically important." The team interviewed representatives from the fields of information technology, energy, manufacturing, construction and health care.

McAtee's report is due in the next few weeks, the community college says.

[Carol Spalding](#), president of RCCC, also says the Salisbury-based community college heard from a group of futurists who talked about their visions for work-force training. That was the first time in

the region that futurists were consulted in planning an educational facility, she says.

Spalding says [bringing jobs to Cabarrus and Rowan counties](#) is the underlying reason for building the technology center.

"We want to create a place and programming that will support the businesses we do have and bring new ones to the area," she says. "This will help us bring a higher level of training and meet the needs of the community, which are a big part of economic development."

The location for the 60,000-square-foot center hasn't yet been determined.

The building will definitely have to be flexible, says [Jack Roach](#), director of special projects at Florence-Darlington Technical College, who is participating in the RCCC planning. The building needs movable walls, classrooms and a laboratory building to house machinery for training.

And one other important thing: The Cabarrus training center needs to have enough heating, air-conditioning and ventilation to deal with the machines in the building, Roach says.

Ken Elkins covers manufacturing, international business and economic development for the Charlotte Business Journal.