

UW-Stout: Among Wisconsin manufacturing leaders uniting to accelerate AI adoption across the state

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MKE Tech Hub, WMEP and UW-Stout form strategic partnership to support mid-market manufacturers

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Menomonie, Wis. – Three of Wisconsin’s leading manufacturing support organizations announced today a groundbreaking partnership to help mid-market manufacturers strategically adopt artificial intelligence and advanced technologies. The collaboration between [MKE Tech Hub Coalition’s Synapse initiative](#), [Wisconsin Manufacturing Extension Partnership](#) (WMEP), and the [Manufacturing Outreach Center](#) (MOC) and [Center for Advanced Manufacturing & AI](#) (CAM-AI), both housed at University of Wisconsin-Stout, Wisconsin’s Polytechnic University, creates the state’s most comprehensive AI transformation support network for manufacturers.

The partnership addresses a critical gap in Wisconsin’s manufacturing ecosystem, where mid-market manufacturers face mounting pressure to modernize using AI solutions but lack access to strategic guidance tailored to their specific needs and resources. With 25% of Wisconsin’s manufacturing workforce approaching retirement, these companies need productivity solutions that enable them to do more with fewer people while attracting next-generation talent.

“MKE Tech Hub’s mission has always been to serve as a catalyst for innovation through meaningful connections,” said Joe Poeschl, Executive Director of MKE Tech Hub Coalition. “This partnership exemplifies that mission perfectly — bringing together the best manufacturing expertise across Wisconsin to support companies that are the backbone of our economy. When mid-market manufacturers succeed, entire communities thrive. This collaboration ensures they have access to the strategic guidance and technical support they need to compete globally.”

Seth Hudson, Executive Director of Corporate Relations & Economic Engagement at UW-Stout, said: “This collaboration exemplifies our commitment to serving Wisconsin’s economy as the state’s Polytechnic University through applied learning and research, business and industry collaboration, and career-focused experiences. By connecting our academic resources with industry expertise and strategic guidance, we’re creating pathways for Wisconsin manufacturers to compete globally while strengthening our state’s workforce.”

Statewide coverage, integrated expertise

The partnership establishes clear geographic coverage across Wisconsin while ensuring coordinated delivery that leverages each organization’s distinct strengths in support Wisconsin’s manufacturers.

MKE Tech Hub Coalition is a nonprofit membership organization serving as a unifying voice for Milwaukee’s tech ecosystem and a catalyst for innovation through meaningful connections. Through its Synapse initiative, MKE Tech Hub provides AI strategy and transformation leadership for mid-market manufacturers across Wisconsin.

UW-Stout, through its Manufacturing Outreach Center, has been designated by the National Institute of Standards and Technology MEP National Network as the Wisconsin Center supporting small and medium sized manufacturers. The federal designation has allowed the MOC to continue its alliance with Madison-based Wisconsin Manufacturing Extension Partnership (WMEP) to continue delivering coordinated, statewide support to Wisconsin’s small- and mid-sized manufacturers. Through MOC’s and WMEP’s statewide field staff, manufacturers will continue to access tailored, hands-on support in lean process improvement, quality management systems, supply chain optimization, leadership development, and the adoption of advanced technologies. Together, MOC and WMEP will continue a 30-year record of creating or retaining over 34,000 jobs, generating \$8.9 billion in

economic impact, and serving more than 575 small and mid-sized manufacturers annually

Wisconsin Manufacturing Extension Partnership (WMEP) serves manufacturers in Southern and Eastern Wisconsin

UW -Stout Manufacturing Outreach Center (MOC) serves manufacturers in Northern and Western Wisconsin

UW-Stout Center for Advanced Manufacturing & AI (CAM-AI) provides statewide applied research, technical problem-solving, and hands-on engineering solutions in advanced manufacturing technologies, automation, robotics, AI/ML and innovation prototyping.

Chris Baichoo, CEO of WMEP, emphasized the collaborative nature of the partnership: “Our manufacturers have been asking for help navigating AI, but they need more than technical training — they need clarity on where AI can create value in their operations. This partnership allows us to bring that strategic lens to our clients, grounded in the real-world manufacturing experience WMEP is known for.”

Aaron Bialzik, Director of UW-Stout’s Manufacturing Outreach Center, highlighted the academic research foundation: “UW-Stout has been at the forefront of applied manufacturing research for decades. Through CAM-AI and MOC, we bring not just consulting expertise but cutting-edge research and hands-on technical validation capabilities. This partnership extends that value across the entire state.”

Accessible to mid-market manufacturers

The partnership specifically caters to the more than 99% of Wisconsin manufacturers operating below \$500 million in revenue — companies often overlooked by tier-1 consulting firms requiring more than \$1 million engagements. By leveraging MKE Tech Hub’s tax-exempt status and the partnership’s collaborative model, the initiative delivers enterprise-grade consulting expertise at mid-market accessible pricing.

Unlike traditional consulting firms that compete for implementation work, MKE Tech Hub’s Synapse initiative operates as a “network orchestrator” — developing strategic methodologies and coordinating delivery through verified partners without competing on implementation. This approach ensures manufacturers receive

vendor-neutral guidance focused solely on business value.

“This partnership represents a fundamentally different approach to manufacturing transformation,” added Sanjay Mohan, Executive Director of AI Strategy at MKE Tech Hub Coalition. “What manufacturers need most isn’t more AI hype — it’s a clear framework for making smart decisions about technology investments. We’re not selling AI solutions — we’re helping manufacturers identify their biggest business challenges first, then determining whether AI is the right answer. By combining Synapse’s problem-first DRIVETM methodology with WMEP’s operational excellence and UW-Stout’s technical expertise, we’re giving Wisconsin manufacturers something they can’t get anywhere else: vendor-neutral strategic guidance backed by world-class implementation support.”

The three organizations will coordinate on joint service offerings including comprehensive manufacturing AI assessments, transformation programs, proof-of-value implementations, and innovation workshops, with each organization contributing its specialized expertise while maintaining clear accountability.

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