

# IFPT/Conestoga Offers a New Program Targeted to Food Manufacturing Leaders

In the fall of 2016, Conestoga College, through the Craig Richardson Institute of Food Processing Technology (IFPT), launched a new graduate certificate program, Operations Leadership in Food Manufacturing. This is a one-year, full time program designed for students who have completed a degree or a diploma in science or engineering, and who want to be prepared for an advanced supervisory career in the food manufacturing industry. Upon completion, graduates will have learned how to design systems, lead teams of people, and manage projects that drive successful business results across all sectors of food processing. According to the program Chair, Luis Garcia, "this program is offered by the IFPT to support the food and beverage industry by providing highly skilled employees that understand all areas of the business".

Courses in the program cover Food Safety Management Systems and Traceability, Quality Assurance, Manufacturing Operations, Comprehensive Maintenance, Team Dynamics and Employee Engagement, Performance and Competency Management, Project Management, Supply Chain Functionality, Lean Six Sigma and Continuous Improvement.

These courses give the students practical experience in setting up comprehensive plans for food operations. Students learn and practice the best tools for developing value-added labour pools and effective plans that include waste reduction, efficiency improvements, appropriate quality assessments and measures, and safe work practices. Utilizing continuous improvement tools, from Lean and Six Sigma programs, including Root Cause Failure Analysis, PDCA, Kaizen, Value Stream Mapping, and others,

students become skilled at identifying and applying the best tools to drive results in a food operation.

Once the projects have been identified through the continuous improvement process, students are able to establish formal work teams which use the most effective tools to drive success, including incenting employees to want to participate on teams, making meetings most effective, and developing team charters, action plans, and status reports to senior management. Students practice those leadership skills in the classroom, when working on individual and team projects, and in the pilot plant.

Students in this program gain exposure to most functions of a food processing operation, including Quality, Food Safety, Maintenance, Operations, Procurement, and Planning. Understanding the functions of each department allows them to look at the overall supply chain to establish best practices and to understand the supplier/customer relationship, both internal and external to the company. They are able to assess the operation using data to identify opportunities for improvement, then to use their communication skills to gain buy-in from employees and other managers. Subsequently they draw upon their leadership skills to get the workforce excited about the change and to coach employees in the various tools, which will drive success.

The graduates of this program learn how important it is to establish suitable measures to determine which opportunities should be addressed first, then to use different measures to examine operations parameters during the change. Ultimately, these leaders use these measures to monitor results ongoing, so that they are sustained.

Many of these skills, some may note, apply to most manufacturing sectors. This program, however, is targeted specifically to food and beverage manufacturing. For anyone who works in the food industry, it is clear that there are obvious differences from other types of manufacturing, such as consumer goods and automotive. In some cases, it is challenging for food companies to recruit and retain talented managers, because many may not have any experience or exposure to the nuances of food processing. The professors and support staff at Conestoga College for this program have more than 100 years of experience in total, working in various roles across numerous functions from several sectors of the food industry in Ontario and across North America. The instructors share real-life experiences with the students and offer hands-on learning practice to better prepare the graduates to integrate more quickly into leadership roles with hiring companies. Kim Wolf, one of the professors for the curriculum, who has worked in senior leadership roles across several sectors in the food industry, adds, "Many companies had traditionally promoted supervisory roles from within their current workforce. There is a definite advantage to that, in that the incumbent person knows the products, policies, people, and processes of the company. However, having trained leaders with other experiences outside of the company offers a valuable addition to the leadership team. It allows for a new approach in reviewing current practices, using continuous improvement tools that existing supervisors may not be aware of or have experience with, and working with the current work teams to drive excellence across the organization. There is no doubt in my mind that this



program readies these graduates to have an immediate impact on the food processing companies upon their hire."

Companies who are seeking world-class leadership in their organizations may contact Luis Garcia at [lgarcia@conestogac.on.ca](mailto:lgarcia@conestogac.on.ca) to discuss opportunities.

For more information on the program including admission requirements, visit <https://www.conestogac.on.ca/fulltime/operations-leadership-in-food-manufacturing>.



## NUTRITION ANALYSIS SERVICE

Cost Effective - members receive a 50% discount on services

Compliant - meet your regulatory obligations

Confidential - guaranteed!

The service includes a nutritional analysis and a camera ready Nutrition Facts label.

### CONTACT US TODAY! (519) 763-4558

[oimp.ca](http://oimp.ca) | [technical@oimp.ca](mailto:technical@oimp.ca)