The Truth About: Manufacturing Employment

Manufacturing is More Productive Than Ever
Improvements in manufacturing efficiency have made American factories more productive than ever and require fewer workers to achieve increasing output. The United States has been able to reach record output with a manufacturing workforce that is roughly the same size as in the 1940s but with each individual worker four times as productive. Higher worker productivity has led to increased wages for manufacturing workers who have postsecondary degrees.

New Manufacturing Jobs Need Advanced Skills
Skill requirements are driving up the education levels of manufacturing workers across the country. In the past, manufacturing workers could find employment without higher education and more advanced skills because the tasks were done by hand. Currently and in the future, manufacturing workers will be doing less work by hand and more work managing machines and advanced software. Manufacturers across the country have added more than a million jobs since the recession, with the job growth going to workers with postsecondary degrees.

Future Manufacturing Employment
In previous decades, manufacturing employment correlated to manufacturing output. However, with the widespread adoption of industrial robotics and more complex software, this correlation has reversed. Currently, every new industrial robot displaces 1.6 manufacturing workers on average. With displacement, new jobs are still created but require advanced cognitive skills to manage this artificial workforce – skills that a postsecondary education provides.