

# Advanced Manufacturing/Integrated Systems Technology Employment Report

Richard Gecan

*“I was concerned about going back to school and didn’t think a typical classroom environment with lectures would work out well for me. So, I was very pleased to learn that the [Advanced Manufacturing/Integrated Systems Technology] program was not what I had pictured at all.” (Richard Gecan, 2004)*

After 17 years of employment as a journeyman millwright pipefitter, Richard Gecan was laid off in April 2003. Due to his long-term employment in the field, searching for a new job was not something he had done in many years and he wasn’t sure where to begin. As is common to most newly laid-off workers, he picked up the newspaper and began searching the classified ads for employment opportunities. One of the first advertisements he came to announced a new Advanced Manufacturing/Integrated Systems Technology (AM/IST) training program at Rock Valley College, specifically designed for dislocated manufacturing workers. The information piqued his interest, so he called to inquire about the program.

Once he learned that he’d have the opportunity to learn electrical, mechanical and electronic skills, especially those related to the use of Programmable Logic Controllers (PLCs), he decided to enroll. He was particularly interested in learning about PLCs because he noticed so many job advertisements were requesting employees who had skills in this technical area. “Most of the jobs listed were looking for multi-crafted skills, in the areas of electrical, PLCs and mechanical,” explained Gecan.

Gecan started his training in December 2003. At the same time, he began mailing his updated resume to

area employers. After completing only two weeks of the training program, Gecan was asked to interview for a Plant Operator position with the SwedishAmerican Health System in Rockford. To prepare for the interview, Gecan and the AM/IST instructor, John Jamont, reviewed parts of the curriculum that had not yet been covered in the course. The Director of Engineering for SwedishAmerican, Richard Marsh, was quite impressed with Gecan’s knowledge and background, as well as his excitement about the new skills he was learning in the AM/IST training program. After being unemployed for eight months, Gecan received an early Christmas present on December 23, 2003 – he was offered a position with SwedishAmerican. As an additional bonus, his new employer requested that he continue his AM/IST training, and complete the entire 10-week course while also working part-time at SwedishAmerican.

SwedishAmerican Health System is headquartered in Rockford, Illinois and serves 12 counties in northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin. The company includes a major acute care hospital; a network of 14 primary care and multi-specialty clinics; the region’s largest home health care agency; and a full spectrum of outpatient, wellness and education programs. Marsh, Gecan’s new supervisor, had many positive comments about Gecan in his new role with the company. “Rick has worked



for us for a few weeks now and we have found him to be a very conscientious and knowledgeable employee. He brings many skills to the department that he’ll use in his daily work. Rick not only has the new [Advanced Manufacturing/Integrated Systems Technology] skills, but he shows a lot of initiative by wanting to continue his training. He has a great attitude, and a continued willingness to be flexible.”

Gecan was very impressed with the IST program and the AM/IST training he received at Rock Valley College. “I was concerned about going back to school and didn’t think a typical classroom environment with lectures would work out well for me. So, I was very pleased to learn that the [Advanced Manufacturing/Integrated Systems Technology] program was not what I had pictured at all. This program is very hands-on, and allowed me the flexibility to move at my own pace. This hands-on method of teaching on the [state-of-the-art] training equipment is marvelous,” explained Gecan.



## National Center for Integrated Systems Technology

Illinois State University, 1802 N. Division St., Suite 603, Morris, IL 60450  
Phone: 815.942.3180 ♦ Email: [ncist@ilstu.edu](mailto:ncist@ilstu.edu) ♦ Website: [www.ncist.ilstu.edu](http://www.ncist.ilstu.edu)

