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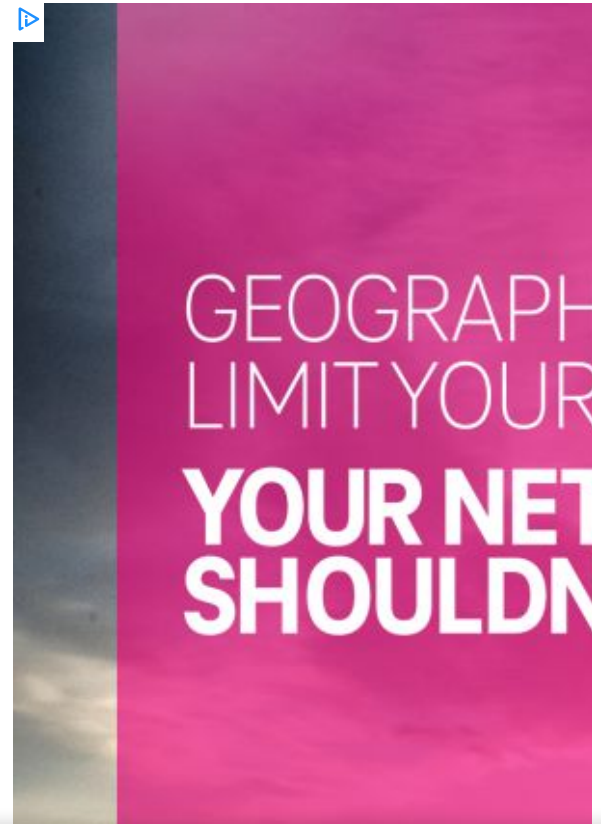
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QUARTZ

You can now become a semiconductor technician in just 10 days





Michelle Cheng

June 2, 2023 · 3 min read



Arizona has long been a magnet for semiconductor companies, and now it's a magnet for their expansions. Intel announced in 2021 it was building two chip factories in Chandler, Arizona, which will bring 6,000 jobs. Last December, Taiwanese chip giant TSMC said it was putting a second factory in the state.

With multibillion-dollar factories on the way comes the need for workers with specialized skills to fill roles at the new facilities. It's a task that Arizona's Maricopa Community Colleges aims to deliver on.

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Working with Intel, the school has created a 10-day program through which students receive training to become semiconductor technicians. The tuition is \$270, which is fully covered by grants for in-state students.

The brevity of the program reflects the needs of the semiconductor industry, flush with CHIPS Act money, to ramp up a specialized workforce fast. The US [enacted the CHIPS Act in 2022](#) to strengthen supply chains and

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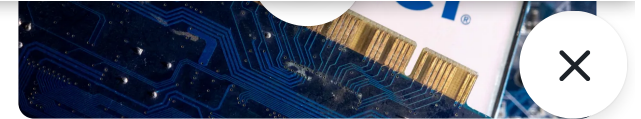
Students can apply for bachelor's degree programs at Maricopa Community Colleges

Chipmakers are expected to [hire more than 20,000 people in Arizona](#) in the coming years, according to Maricopa Community College officials. The [mean annual salary](#) for a semiconductor processing technician in the US is \$48,370.

How to skill up a workforce fast

Even before the CHIPS Act was signed into law, Intel was having trouble finding workers with the skills the company needed, says Tom Pearson, the interim associate dean of workforce programs at Maricopa Community Colleges.

So in 2021, the school discussed with Intel and TSMC what future employees would need to be taught in order to enter the workforce as an entry-level semiconductor technician. The resulting course features a mix of both theory and practical skills, from setting up parallel circuits to learning how hydraulics work. At the end of the program, students can either receive three credits



Intel reportedly in talks to be \$10 billion anchor investor in Arm's IPO

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[associate degree](#). Dropping this educational requirement helps widen the talent pool amid the ramping up of a domestic supply chain, Pearson said. Employers are realizing that “as long as they just get the skills, they really don’t need the degree,” he said.

[datawrapper-chart-clOqu](#)

Creating a more practical educational program

The program’s brevity is also practical for the students. People who enroll in these courses may already be working, and would more likely to be able to take two weeks away to attend the training versus three or four weeks, Pearson said. Maricopa has implemented other short programs, such as one to teach students how to work with fiberglass, which has landed graduates of the program in jobs at Boeing.

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recommend students to other, related manufacturing firms in the meantime. So far, about 700 students have completed the program, and there's a waiting list to enroll. The program's students are largely people of color or first-generation college students, Pearson said, and their ages have ranged from 20s to 60s.

US data still shows that someone with a college degree will, on average, make more money in the long run [than someone without one](#). But the Maricopa program is a good example of a way to prepare prospective employees for an industry that might soon be desperate for workers.

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