




# Delta's welding program is on fire

(Figuratively speaking, of course.)



“The Great Lakes Bay Manufacturing Association Scholarship helped me tremendously.”

– Aleksander Zeilinski  
Welding student

**Welding:** the process of combining two or more materials by heating them to melting point.

Aleksander Zielinski was at a boy scouts camp in high school when he was introduced to welding for the first time.

Dressed in protective gear and a metal plate in hand, he was working toward his welding merit badge.

“I remember realizing how cool it was that I melted something with fire,” said Zielinski. “Some of my classmates were struggling with the material, but I loved it and thought, ‘What else can I do with this?’”

After high school, he enrolled in the 2+2 welding engineering technology program with Delta and Ferris State University. He will graduate from Delta in May and head to Ferris State for two years to complete his bachelor’s degree.

The experienced instructors, location and cost of tuition paired with scholarship opportunities are what drew Zielinski to Delta. Plus, he got to pass his grandmother’s house on the way to campus.

“The Great Lakes Bay Manufacturing Association Scholarship helped me tremendously,” he said. “My parents have a college fund for me and I’ve also been working to pay for a lot of the costs, but the scholarship helped keep the bills down.”

### Blazing the trail for students

Zielinski is one of 136 students taking welding classes at Delta this year. It’s a skillset that Jim Proctor, associate professor and coordinator of the program, said is in high demand by area employers.

“We get a lot of calls from local employers looking for welders, both entry level and experienced,” Proctor said.

Employers want to hire welders with soft skills, like communication and dependability, said Proctor, so those skills are incorporated into the curriculum.

“It’s important for us to guide our students on how to start or continue a fulfilling career in whatever industry they land in – and that list is wide ranging,” he said.

From manufacturing and pipeline work to machinists and artists to

ironworkers and electricians, the need for welding is encompassing. At Delta, students find a well-rounded, solid foundation so when the time comes, they are ready to enter the workforce.

Experienced instructors and state-of-the-art learning spaces help with that. In 2020, the welding laboratory received several upgrades. The lighting and exhaust systems were updated and a dedicated grinding room was created, which lessens the noise level so instructors can teach in the lab space while students practice.

“Bridges, skyscrapers, pipes and more. It’s all put together by welding. In fact, about half of all domestically made products have a weld on them somewhere. We want good welders. Our safety and economy rely on it,” said Proctor.

Job security aside, for many professional welders, it all began with a spark. A flicker of curiosity. Just ask Zielinski. ■

## Delta’s welding program

— *by the numbers*

**3** full-time instructors – who are certified welding inspectors and educators by the American Welding Society.

**7** adjunct instructors

**45** welding booths

**10** grinding stations

Interested in learning more about welding?

Contact James Proctor.

989-686-9599 • jamesproctor@delta.edu

