

## OPINION

### COMMENTARY

# Preparing for Micron goes well beyond an environmental process

*From housing to child care to workforce development, Central New York needs to be ready to support, sustain and thrive from this project.*

**Samuel Rowser** *Guest Opinion*



**Manish Bhatia, executive vice president of global operations for Micron Technology, speaks Oct. 19, 2023, in front of a projected image of the planned cleanroom at Onondaga Community College.**

*Glenn Coin, [gcoin@syracuse.com](mailto:gcoin@syracuse.com) file photo*

What does a \$100 billion investment actually look like?

People have asked me that question repeatedly since Micron announced in 2022 that it would be building the nation's largest memory manufacturing facility here in Central New York. It's not that people have difficulty conceptualizing what that amount of investment looks like in dollar form or as a physical factory built out over two decades. The real question people are asking is this: What does the

Micron project mean for my family, my future, my neighborhood and our community?

A promising step is the recent release of the Micron Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). This report is more than a compliance milestone; it represents another concrete sign that Micron's transformative investment in our region is real and progressing and, importantly, that Central New York needs to be ready.



**Onondaga Community College technology professor Mike Grieb works on a lab experiment about gear ratios with Cameran Joncas, a student in the college's Electromechanical Technology program, last year. The major was added in response to Micron Technology's planned chipmaking complex.**

*Onondaga Community College*

## **SOCIAL IMPACTS**

In addition to discussing essential areas of environmental impact, the DEIS provides a deep dive into potential social impacts of the project. Those impacts include a population boom requiring new housing options, the jobs driving the need for workforce training and necessary support for working families. As a community, we absolutely need to be on point with the analyses of the potential impacts. At the same time, we must also stay focused on ensuring Central New York is ready to support, sustain and thrive from this unprecedented investment.

Thankfully, our region has had a lengthy head start. We are seeing the impacts of substantial investments in education — the most powerful tool to prepare for growth — thanks in large part to millions of dollars Micron has invested in local projects even before breaking ground in Clay.

At On Point, we are on the front lines of helping people connect the dots between large-scale investments and local impact. Thanks to Micron's support, On Point is intensifying its focus on students interested in high-tech careers.

We help those students, and all of our students, to obtain education or training by addressing obstacles they may face. We help cover the cost of books, secure housing deposits, and arrange transportation to get to and from school. We are also working with students in high schools across six counties, collaborating with teachers to identify students with STEM interest and talent, and then helping them see a future they might never have imagined before. Micron's support is allowing our students to stay on point for the future.

This work is bigger than any one organization. Significant collaborations are not only possible but essential for success.

Applications for the first classes at the Syracuse STEAM School opened in January, with plans for the school to open, at least in part, for the 2025-26 school year. On Point is already in the Syracuse City School District's five high schools working with juniors and seniors, and we will expand that service to the STEAM School.



Construction of the state-of-the-art Micron Cleanroom Simulation Lab at Onondaga Community College is on track for completion along the same timeline, complementing new coursework already in flight. The first 12 students graduated from Onondaga Community College's new electromechanical technology major in May, including eight served by On Point.

## **COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS**

In the weeks ahead, as we evaluate exactly how Micron will physically fit into the region and how we will fit with them, these broad collaborations will be critical.

Addressing wrap-around services, like accessible, affordable child care for working parents and student parents, will take many partners across the region. Even when resources like Micron's own child care center begin to pop up in a region long struggling as a child care desert, we need to explore new ways to increase support for families who wouldn't be able to access opportunities without certainty that their children will be cared for.

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As we approach the day when shovels meet soil, we must listen for the answers to questions that arose from our doubts and concerns. We should have confidence that this project is going to happen and brings opportunities for our children and grandchildren.

For young people beginning to imagine new possibilities, for families hoping for a future that looks different than the past and for a region learning to believe in its own potential again — this is the time to keep moving forward with purpose and resolve. This is how, together as a community, we keep it on point.

*Samuel Rowser is the executive director of On Point for College, a nonprofit college attainment program founded in 1999.*

