



**INTERNATIONAL MANUFACTURING TECHNOLOGY SHOW**  
SEPTEMBER 14 - 19, 2026 • MCCORMICK PLACE, CHICAGO

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**NEWS RELEASE**

## **Students and Educators Set To Explore the Power of Technology and Innovation at IMTS 2026**

*Hands-On Experiences and Career Pathways Return To Inspire the Next Generation*

McLean, Va. (December 4, 2025) — The Smartforce Student Summit will return to IMTS – The International Manufacturing Technology Show, Sept. 14-19, 2026, at McCormick Place in Chicago. This will mark the summit's 14th edition since its launch in 1998. Coproduced for the second time by AMT – The Association For Manufacturing Technology and SME, the 2026 summit will once again bring together thousands of students, educators, and industry professionals to explore the technologies, careers, and opportunities driving the future of manufacturing.

The Smartforce Student Summit has become a cornerstone of IMTS since its inception. It was designed to spark interest among students and educators from all levels of education in careers across manufacturing technology sectors. The 2026 summit will return to Hall C of the North Building, placing it at the heart of the IMTS experience and expanding access for students and educators to experience the full scale of the show.

The Student Summit looks and feels like a trade show designed for the next generation that allows students to learn and experience by getting their hands on featured technologies. In 2024, nearly 15,000 students, faculty, and staff from K-12 and postsecondary educational institutions in 49 states attended, with approximately one-third of attendees coming from universities and community or technical colleges. They saw 62 featured exhibitors representing best-in-class industry opportunities, technologies, and research/education capabilities, such as the ARM Institute, BlueForge Alliance, Chicago Public Schools, FANUC America, Haas Automation, Heidenhain, IACMI – The Composites Institute, Mazak, NASA, Quality Vision International, Universal Robots, Yaskawa, and Zeiss Industrial Quality Solutions.

“The summit is a game changer for our industry’s talent pipeline,” says Douglas K. Woods, president of AMT – The Association For Manufacturing Technology. “IMTS gives educators direct exposure to the technologies driving today’s production floors, inspiring them to elevate their equipment, curricula, and training programs. The result is a new generation of candidates who arrive with stronger skills and a

clearer understanding of industry needs. AMT and IMTS are proud to keep growing the Smartforce Student Summit to support the future of our workforce.”

For 2026, the Smartforce Student Summit will introduce Smartforce Career Pathways, a digital installation designed to help IMTS exhibitors promote entry-level career opportunities directly to the thousands of students attending the summit. Through interactive job boards and digital listings, students will be able to explore early-career positions offered by participating IMTS exhibitors.

“The Smartforce Student Summit reflects what’s possible when industry, educators, and organizations like SME and AMT come together with a shared purpose,” says Jeannine Kunz, executive director and CEO of SME. “By connecting students with hands-on technologies and real career opportunities, we’re strengthening the talent pipeline and helping more young people see manufacturing for the cool, tech-driven industry that it is. This collaboration is essential to the growth, resilience, and future of our industry.”

The 2026 summit will feature dozens of interactive exhibits showcasing hands-on demonstrations of robotics, automation, additive manufacturing, CNC machining, precision measurement and metrology, and digital manufacturing technologies that appeal to students of all ages – from elementary to university level. The Smartforce Student Summit has become a national gathering point for students and educators, especially those traveling from the Midwest, including Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio. As participation expands from coast to coast, attendance has grown from about 12,000 in 2022 to nearly 15,000 registrants in 2024. Projections for the 2026 summit estimate more than 16,000 participants from an even wider geographic mix across the nation.

The **Smartforce Student Summit at IMTS 2026** is free for students, educators, school administrators, and parent chaperones. IMTS 2026 will be held Sept. 14-19, 2026, at McCormick Place in Chicago, Illinois. IMTS exhibitors and attendees are encouraged to register their family members to attend IMTS via the Smartforce Student Summit. Registration opens in February 2026. For more information, visit [IMTS.com/Smartforce](https://www.imts.com/Smartforce).

Visitors to IMTS who wish to support STEM and robotics programs can also participate in the **Miles for Manufacturing (M4M) 5K Run/Walk**. It will be held on Wednesday morning during IMTS week, along the shores of Lake Michigan. Since 2014, M4M has raised more than \$250,000 for schools and STEM programs nationwide to support advanced manufacturing education. Because IMTS covers all production costs, 100% of the proceeds go directly to these programs. Learn more and register for IMTS at [IMTS.com](https://www.imts.com).

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## Media Resources

**Video Name:** Achieve the Impossible

**Video Link:** <https://youtu.be/ol0G7inAGrM>

**Video Caption:** Every two years, the manufacturing technology industry comes together at IMTS to redefine and transform the future by achieving the impossible.



## IMTS Photos and Logos

- [Download](#) IMTS 2026 logo.
- [Download](#) IMTS-approved photos for media.

## About IMTS – The International Manufacturing Technology Show

IMTS – The International Manufacturing Technology Show is where the creators, builders, sellers, and drivers of manufacturing technology come to connect and achieve the impossible. Attendees discover advanced manufacturing solutions that include innovations in CNC machining, automation, robotics, additive, software, AI, and transformative digital technologies that are driving the industry forward. Owned and produced by AMT – The Association For Manufacturing Technology, IMTS is the largest and most defining trade event for manufacturing technology in the Western Hemisphere. IMTS 2026 will be held Sept.14-19, 2026, at McCormick Place in Chicago. Discover more at [IMTS.com](https://www.imts.com) and connect with IMTS on [social](#).

## About AMT – The Association For Manufacturing Technology

AMT – The Association For Manufacturing Technology represents U.S.-based providers of manufacturing technology – the advanced machinery, devices, and digital equipment that U.S. manufacturing relies on to be productive, innovative, and competitive. Located in McLean, Virginia, near the nation's capital, AMT acts as the industry's voice to accelerate the pace of innovation, increase global competitiveness, and develop manufacturing's advanced workforce of tomorrow. With extensive expertise in industry data and market intelligence, as well as a full complement of international business operations, AMT offers its members an unparalleled level of support. AMT also produces IMTS – The International Manufacturing Technology Show, the premier manufacturing technology event in North America. Learn more at [AMTonline.org](https://www.amtonline.org).

## About SME

Established in 1932 as a nonprofit organization, SME represents the entire North American manufacturing industry, including manufacturers, academia, professionals, students, and the communities in which they operate. We believe manufacturing holds the key to economic growth and prosperity, and champion the industry's potential as a diverse, thriving, and valued ecosystem. SME accelerates new technology adoption and builds North America's talent and capabilities to advance manufacturing and drive competitiveness, resiliency, and national security. SME designs new ways to understand and solve problems, and our solutions advance the next wave of growth in manufacturing. Learn more at [SME.org](https://www.sme.org).

