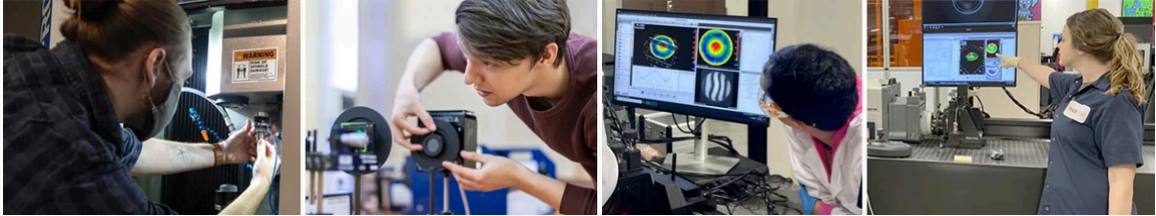


# 2023 AmeriCOM Year in Review

2023 was an exciting year for AmeriCOM and our partners as we made significant progress in our three-pronged mission of creating workforce training programs, developing optics manufacturing technologies, and transitioning those technologies from research into operations. Check out the highlights in our 2023 Year in Review.

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT HIGHLIGHTS



- **Monroe Community College (MCC), Rochester, NY**  
Achieved record high enrollment in its **Optical Systems Technology Program** with near 100% job placement rate within the optics field by graduation.
- **Front Range Community College (FRCC), Boulder, CO**  
Engaged high school students through a **summer intensive course in Optics & Photonics** including hands-on labs, discussions with industry experts, and tours of local optics manufacturing facilities.
- **Sussex County Community College (SCCC), Newton, NJ**  
Broke ground on a 2,500 sq. ft. Optics Technology Center that will include classrooms and a new fabrication lab for more industry-standard manufacturing instruction.
- **Valencia College, Orlando, FL**  
Launched a new, **15-week optics certification program** to meet the growing demand for precision optics and photonics technicians in Central Florida. Enrollment is full with students waitlisting to join the program.

***AmeriCOM continues to evaluate more sites for future ecosystems.***

## DEFENSE PRECISION OPTICS CONSORTIUM (DPOC) HIGHLIGHTS

AmeriCOM's research group is leading partnerships between industry, government, and academia focused on continuous improvement to drive the development of optics manufacturing systems. This effort is critical to the defense industry and will provide optics manufacturers with next generation capabilities.

### What does that look like today?

All of us working together to solve industry's manufacturing challenges.

- Research projects, both internal to AmeriCOM and partnered with universities or optics companies, moving the needle forward on what is 'state-of-the-art' in manufacturing technologies, up and down the optics chain, from substrate materials to post-coat testing and beyond.
- Your organization letting us know what your major manufacturing challenges are and how you think we can help you fix them.
- The DoD five years from now purchasing more capable technologies that are produced more efficiently, with shorter lead times, and at lower cost.
- Success for both the DoD and the companies on which it depends – your companies and your people.

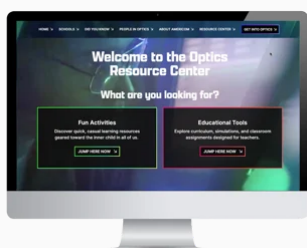
**Key activities undertaken so far include:**

- Executing research with universities and optics companies driving innovation across the optics chain from substrate materials to post-coat testing, and beyond.
- Working with industry leaders to identify major manufacturing challenges and potential solutions.
- Planned for and executing the stand up of a new research facility in Fairport, NY to open in February 2024. Look for a save-the-date notice soon for the ribbon-cutting.

Join us by starting the conversation about the challenges your organization encounters and keep your eyes on future newsletters for further details on DPOC projects current and future!

## NATIONAL OUTREACH CAMPAIGN HIGHLIGHTS

Our dynamic marketing campaign features engaging resources and compelling stories from diverse students to attract and cultivate the next generation of precision optics technicians. The mix of digital and traditional tactics helped drive organizational goals of establishing and maintaining regional optics ecosystems, and growing the number of high schools and two-year colleges offering precision optics programs.



- Expanded **The Future Is Optics** marketing campaign and website to include four Optics Technician “Heroes” who share their career path journeys. We added a **Learning Resource Center** web page to provide students, parents, and teachers hundreds of links to games, publications, and “Next Generation Science Standards” (NGSS) curriculum for the optics and photonics industry.



- Created the video **The Next Generation of Optics Technicians**, a fun, on-the-street interview style compilation of technicians answering questions about their careers in optics.
- Built a database and an ongoing reporting system to supply community colleges with leads for potential optics students garnered through digital marketing efforts.
- Launched the marketing campaign in central Florida to support the newest precision optics ecosystem at Valencia College. A customized marketing strategy helped recruit the first cohort to Valencia’s Precision Optics, Photonics, and Fiber Optics Technician training course which aims to have students job-ready in less than four months.



- Completed the first year of the monthly industry newsletter, ***Optics Insider*** featuring conference reviews, ecosystem partners' accomplishments, spotlights of instructors and technicians in the optics industry, and outreach programs to students and teachers.
- Co-hosted **Student Day at SPIE Optifab 2023** with Optimax, engaging more than 350 high-school students with activities, giveaways, and networking opportunities with local optics employers.
- Provided professional development for high school science teachers through credentialed, hands-on, **optics workshops** at Sussex County Community College and Front Range Community College.

## EVENT PARTICIPATION HIGHLIGHTS



**AmeriCOM proudly sponsored, presented, and participated in various industry events around the country including:**

- **SPIE Photonics West**, January 2023, San Francisco, CA – AmeriCOM’s panel discussion “*Where Have All the Technicians Gone? How Optics Ecosystems Are Bringing Them Back,*” highlighted the success of the ecosystem model.
- **Education and Training in Optics & Photonics (ETOP)**, May 2023, Cocoa Beach, FL – AmeriCOM met with optics and education industry leaders to help drive workforce development goals.
- **SPIE Optics + Photonics**, August 2023, San Diego, CA – AmeriCOM met with industry leaders to discuss technician hiring needs for potential ecosystem exploration.
- **AACC Advocates in Action**, September 2023, Washington, D.C. – AmeriCOM was represented at the American Association of Community Colleges advocacy event in Washington, D.C. and learned about policies affecting workforce development.
- **SPIE Summit**, September 2023, Washington, D.C. – As a returning sponsor of this second annual event, AmeriCOM helped shape the summit by participating on the Planning Committee. Dr. Alexis Vogt, our Workforce and Higher Education Executive Director, moderated a panel discussion on workforce development.
- **SPIE Optifab**, October 2023, Rochester, NY – Optics leaders gathered to discuss strengthening the precision optics workforce at AmeriCOM’s Plenary Session, “*It Takes an Ecosystem: Building the Precision Optics Industry, One Technician at a Time.*”
- **Defense Manufacturing Conference (DMC)**, December 2023, Nashville, TN – AmeriCOM’s Kristen Lynch, Engineering Manager, DPOC presented “*Industry-Wide Uncertainties in Measuring Key Optical Characteristics of HE Laser Components*” as part of the conference’s technical session.

## THE AMERICOM TEAM

### Board Members:

- Chair, **Mike Bechtold** – President, OptiPro Systems

- Treasurer, **Kirk Warden** – President, LaCroix Precision Optics
- Secretary, **Rick Plympton** – CEO, Optimax
- **Bob Bicksler** – Past President and CEO of JML Optical; Senior Advisor at Focus Investment Banking
- **Jennifer Cable** – President, Thorlabs
- **Len Chaloux** – Past President, Moore Nanotechnology
- **Jessica DeGroote Nelson** – Senior Director of Optical Product Development, Edmund Optics
- **Birgit Gillman** – Retired, Past Director, Optics Manufacturing, ZYGO Corporation
- **Kathleen Richardson** – UCF Trustee Chair Professor, Pegasus Professor, and FPCE Professor of Optics and Materials Science and Engineering at University of Central Florida

### Staff:

- **Bob Bicksler** – President & CEO
- **Rosalie Clemens** – Vice President, Workforce Development and Community Engagement
- **Josanne DeNatale** – National Marketing and Workforce Development Operations Director
- **Kristen Lynch** – Engineering Manager, Defense Precision Optics Consortium (DPOC)
- **Kirsten Nobel** – Program Manager, Workforce and Higher Education
- **Jeff Ruckman** – VP, Defense Precision Optics Consortium (DPOC)
- **Donna Smith** – Science Educator Liaison
- **Peggy Trabert** – Marketing and Communications Manager
- **Alexis Vogt, PhD** – Workforce and Higher Education Executive Director

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*We are pleased to share this edition of our newsletter with you. If you enjoy this content, please share with anyone you think may also appreciate it!*



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