

The Best US Colleges for Plastics Engineering Degrees

This presentation showcases some of the nation's most distinguished academic programs that are preparing the next generation of plastics industry leaders. The slideshow is below:

https://www.plasticstoday.com/workforce-training/us-polymer-plastics-engineering-colleges?ADTRK=InformaMarkets&utm_source=eloqua&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=15_NL_PT_Newsfeed_Edit_Sub_20251204&sp_cid=22185&utm_content=15_NL_PT_Newsfeed_Edit_Sub_20251204&sp_aid=45495&sp_rid=14422331&sp_eh=6f62bd4124daaed14f3183d2c6dfa3715aac70ab6702f0072f075ffb156e0062

Institutions offer educational opportunities for students seeking careers in the plastics industry. serts/iStock via Getty Images

In an era where advanced manufacturing technologies and sustainable practices are revolutionizing the plastics industry, the need for skilled professionals has never been more critical.

For students considering a career in the plastics industry, recent trends suggest it could prove to be a solid decision. The industry is ranked as the sixth largest in the United States, and in 2023, the sector made a significant contribution to the US economy, supporting more than a million jobs and generating impressive shipments valued at \$519 billion, according to the [Plastics Industry Association \(PLASTICS\) 2024 Size and Impact Report](#).

Notably, Texas led the nation in plastics industry employment, while Indiana had the highest concentration of plastics industry workers, according to the report. The industry's growth in real value-added outpaced that of the entire manufacturing sector.

This presentation showcases some of the nation's most distinguished academic programs that are preparing the next generation of plastics industry leaders. These institutions stand at the forefront of plastics education, combining cutting-edge technical training with practical industry experience to create well-rounded professionals ready to tackle tomorrow's challenges.

A forward-looking industry

The plastics industry remains a cornerstone of modern manufacturing, touching virtually every sector of the economy — from automotive and aerospace to medical devices, packaging, and consumer goods. As the industry continues to evolve, incorporating advanced technologies, automation, and sustainable practices, companies are actively seeking talented graduates who possess both theoretical knowledge and hands-on expertise.

The programs highlighted in this presentation represent the gold standard in plastics education, offering comprehensive curricula that blend traditional processing techniques with emerging technologies and sustainable manufacturing practices.

These distinguished programs offer students unique advantages that set them apart in the job market:

- State-of-the-art laboratory facilities that mirror real-world manufacturing environments
- Direct collaboration with industry partners on research and development projects
- Internship opportunities with leading plastics manufacturers
- Specialized coursework in areas such as polymer science, injection molding, and sustainable materials
- Access to cutting-edge equipment and software used in modern manufacturing
- Industry-experienced faculty members who bring practical knowledge to the classroom

Graduates well-prepared to meet industry challenges

For employers in the plastics industry, graduates from these programs represent a valuable pipeline of talent equipped with the skills needed to drive innovation and operational excellence. These students enter the workforce with:

- Strong foundation in materials science and processing techniques
- Practical experience with industry-standard equipment and software
- Understanding of quality control and process optimization
- Knowledge of sustainable practices and circular economy principles
- Project management and problem-solving capabilities
- Familiarity with Industry 4.0 concepts and digital manufacturing

The importance of these academic programs extends beyond individual career preparation — they are essential for maintaining the competitiveness of the entire plastics industry. As manufacturers face increasing pressure to innovate, improve efficiency, and adopt sustainable practices, the need for well-educated professionals continues to grow. These programs serve as bridges between academic research and industrial application, fostering innovation and ensuring the industry's continued evolution.

The institutions featured in this presentation have demonstrated consistent success in preparing graduates who go on to make significant contributions to the plastics industry. Their alumni can

be found in leadership positions across the sector, driving technological advancement and implementing sustainable solutions. For companies looking to secure their future workforce and maintain their competitive edge, these programs represent invaluable partners in developing the talent pipeline.

As we explore each program in detail, you'll discover how these institutions are shaping the future of plastics manufacturing through their commitment to excellence in education, research, and industry collaboration. Their graduates are not just prepared for careers — they're prepared to lead the industry into its next chapter of innovation and sustainable growth.

If you don't have the time to review the entire slideshow:

Penn State Behrend

Auburn University

Pennsylvania College of Technology

UMass Lowell

UMass Amherst

Western Washington University

University of Wisconsin – Stout

Ferris State University

New Jersey Institute of Technology

Case Western Reserve University