

# National organization president commends, advises Ridgewater NDT program

## *Industry leader is 1982 alum*

HUTCHINSON – Spring is when Ridgewater College technical programs invite industry professionals on campus for advisory discussions addressing continuous improvement and trends to keep training and curriculum current with industry standards, practices and demands.

Last week, the Nondestructive Testing Technology (NDT) program was honored to welcome the president of the American Society for Nondestructive Testing (ASNT), David Bajula. It was double bonus because Bajula is a 1982 NDT alum, originally from Rockford, and currently from the Houston, Texas area.

Bajula, who has spent 35 years in the NDT field, is currently the general manager for Acuren's Advanced NDT Services. He holds nine of the 12 NDT level III methodology certifications (with his sights on obtaining them all) and has worked in nuclear power, aerospace, petrochemical and refining industries with such companies as General Electric, Combustion Engineering, and Acuren Inspection, where he has spent the last 18 years.

"Ridgewater NDT, by far, has the best reputation in the industry," Bajula explained. "People who come out of Ridgewater College have an unfair advantage," he said with a smile. High standards for student performance create that advantage.

Bajula credited his cousin from Delano for getting him into the program, and credited retired faculty Dennis Berndt and Mike Mullan for helping him make connections to get work experience, even before he graduated. "The college really teaches you to get involved and to stay involved.... They taught us the lessons and the importance of quality and safety as it relates to safety and NDT and what we do."

A few years ago, current faculty member Wade Padrnos invited Bajula to be on the advisory board and he was happy to get involved. "I have always had a real close attachment to Hutchinson," he said.

"David Bajula is one of our success stories," explained Ridgewater's Mike Boehme, dean of technical programs. "As an NDT graduate, he rose to a leadership role within Acuren and more recently as the president of ASNT. He, along with industry leaders from across the country, form our NDT advisory committee ensuring that our program is the best it can be. We are incredibly proud of and appreciative of the work David has done for us."



Bajula specializes in electromagnetics and ultrasonic methods, but is also registered as a Chartered Engineer by the Engineering Council of London and has extensive experience in technical consulting and development, quality assurance, and program development. He is a past ASNT Technician of the Year in the Houston area and was recognized as an ASNT Fellow.

The alum had two priorities he wanted to emphasize with the Ridgewater advisory board this year: 1) the need for advanced NDT specialists to be mentors for the less experienced technicians, and 2) the need for Ridgewater to keep training standards high in times when some companies are considering lowering standards to meet their employment needs.

“The opportunities that I have had in industry to solve great problems, save lives, and really create a safe environment out there in industry have been great,” Bajula said. He is proud of how the NDT industry helps everybody be safer in so many ways.

“I respect the guy to the nth degree,” Padrnos said. “He has really made the most of his opportunities to be as successful as he has been.”

Who knows? Maybe one day Bajula will return to the Hutchinson area to be the ultimate of mentors – an instructor. “That would be a success story that I could certainly live by,” he said.