

TESTIMONY OF

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Before the

House Committee on Science, Space and Technology

“STEM EDUCATION IN ACTION: COMMUNITIES PREPARING FOR JOBS OF THE FUTURE”

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Chairman Hall and Congresswoman Johnson and members of the committee, I am Myron Barnett, Human Resources Manager, at International Paper's Texarkana Mill. I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee today to discuss how a skilled STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) workforce is critical to the success of International Paper's Texarkana Mill. The Texarkana Mill is a part of International Paper, a company which currently employees 60,000 employees in more than 24 countries. International Paper is a global leader in the paper and packaging industry with manufacturing operations in North America, Europe, Latin America, Asia and North Africa.

The facility that I'm representing in Texarkana is situated on more than 1,500 acres in Domino, which is a part of Cass County, Texas. In 2012, we will celebrate our 40th Anniversary at the Texarkana Mill. We currently employ roughly 800 hourly and salaried employees. We have an enormous economic impact on this region. With labor, wood purchases, equipment, maintenance and capital improvements our economic impact in this community totals nearly \$300 million annually. Most economists would say that you could multiply that figure times three or five in total direct and indirect economic impact. We are truly committed to the communities where our employees live and work. In addition to the economic impact we have in this area, we contribute more than \$250,000 to the local community through foundation grants, community giving and our annual United Way campaign.

International Paper's Texarkana Mill hires for a wide range of jobs from manual labor to automated equipment operators to maintenance, mechanical and instrument electricians. We also have a large number of salaried employees with expertise in engineering, accounting, communications, human resources and other professional areas.

At our most entry level positions, it's imperative that our employees have basic computer and technology skills and have knowledge of routine procedures within the manufacturing environment. Not only do they need these skills, but they also need training in critical thinking and problem solving. This is one of the reasons I'm glad to be here today – it gives me the opportunity to let this committee know that we have a solid workforce at International Paper, but we definitely see areas where we could improve our recruitment efforts early in the education system. With an entire generation of skilled employees at all levels retiring at a rapid pace, an educated workforce is essential to the success of our business.

We define our workforce both in terms of production and maintenance employees versus engineering and management employees. When we speak to our engineering employee base we're looking at chemical, mechanical, electrical, civil and environmental engineers. It's imperative that on the production and maintenance side that we're looking at individuals that have good computer knowledge, PLC's and are skilled from a technical standpoint. It is our company's

preference to have production employees who have exposure to technology in areas like DCS (Distribution Control Systems), as well.

From a recruiting standpoint, we have been fortunate to find employees from production, maintenance as well as our salaried employees locally and in surrounding areas. However, that is getting more and more difficult. Our company has a broad based recruiting effort at major universities across the country, but locally we focus much of our recruiting efforts at proven successful engineering schools like Texas A&M and Louisiana Tech.

As the Human Resources manager at this facility, I believe that in order to avoid a disconnect between the jobs we want to keep in the U.S. and our workforce's ability to perform these jobs, that we simply have to start educating production and maintenance employees earlier in the high school years. By doing this we expose students and potential employees to computers and technology as well as opportunities available to them after high school and college. Frankly, we don't see the type of exposure to computers and technology that makes for a skilled workforce happening at this time outside of video games, smart phones and apps.

At this time, our company is not working with local colleges and universities on training programs, but it's something we'd like to get involved with. Not just at

the collegiate level but also with local K-12 schools that help inspire a future STEM workforce.

I'd like to thank the committee for allowing me to represent the 800 International Paper employees here in Texarkana. This is a critical subject for recruitment and I appreciate your time and inviting me to be involved in today's hearing.