

Program Review

Executive Summary

Polymer Engineering Technology

Majors Reviewed:

- *Polymer Engineering Technology, B.S.*
- *Polymer Technology, A.A.S.*

August 2025



Pennsylvania
College of Technology
A Penn State Affiliate

The Polymer Engineering Technology program at Pennsylvania College of Technology has a longstanding history of excellence, beginning in 1986 with industry-backed support and launching one of the college's first bachelor's degrees in 1992. The program is nationally recognized as one of only seven ABET-accredited plastics/polymer programs and maintains a strong record of graduate success, with a 100% job placement rate and high retention.

To address declining enrollment, the department has made strategic changes. These include removing the word "Plastics" from program names to combat negative public perception, implementing aggressive recruitment strategies targeting high school students, and securing a \$594,574 NSF grant to launch a new one-year certificate program beginning in Fall 2026. This stackable certificate is designed for high school students, incumbent workers, and first-year college students, and can feed into existing associate and bachelor's degree pathways, evolving the program into a "1+1+ 2" model.

While enrollment remains low (~12 new students per year), the program is proactively evolving. New lab equipment, outreach initiatives, and a modernized ABET assessment approach are strengthening instruction and accountability. The program has also added courses in sustainable materials, automation, and Industry 4.0, ensuring graduates are well-prepared for industry needs.

Key future challenges include aging lab equipment and persistent misconceptions about plastics. However, strong support from the Industry Advisory Committee, College leadership, and national peers helps to ensure the program remains adaptive and forward-looking.

Penn College's Polymer Engineering Technology program continues to provide students with a hands-on, industry-informed education that prepares them for well-paying, impactful careers in a vital and evolving field.