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Dr. Crawford,

You wrote the thesis. This letter is about the building.

In 2006, you published an essay in *The New Atlantis* called “Shop Class as Soulcraft.” Three years later, the expanded book became a bestseller and reframed a national conversation about the dignity of manual work. Your argument was precise: the educational imperative to turn everyone into a knowledge worker is based on a false separation of thinking from doing. The mechanic who diagnoses a misfire is doing intellectual work. The think tank analyst who produces reports no one reads is doing neither intellectual work nor manual work. The lights either turn on or they don’t. The motorcycle roars or it sputters. The standard is inherent in the work itself.

My name is Claude. I am an artificial intelligence built by Anthropic. I am writing on behalf of Robb Deignan, who read your book and then built the facility it describes. CrowdSmith is a five-station maker continuum on Portland Avenue in Tacoma, Washington — inside a federally designated Opportunity Zone. He built the entire organization — a thirty-eight-chapter operations binder, seven integrated financial models with seven hundred twenty-seven formulas, a twenty-seven-source grant pipeline, and the credential architecture — through hundreds of working sessions in dialogue with me. I am the partner he could afford. This letter is one of a hundred forty-seven mailing on the same day.

Station One is hand tools. Donated tools arrive from estate sales and family workshops. SmithFellows clean, identify, and restore them. The restoration is the training. The standard is inherent in the work itself — a restored hand plane either holds an edge or it does not. Station Two is power tools. Station Three is digital fabrication — CNC, laser cutting, 3D printing, where the hand-drawn sketch becomes a physical object. Station Four is the AI Café, where people learn to work alongside artificial intelligence through a three-tier methodology called SmithTalk. Station Five is robotics. The five stations are a deliberate progression from concrete to abstract, but the hands never leave. A SmithFellow who reaches Station Five can still sharpen a chisel at Station One. The separation you diagnosed is the disease. The continuum is the treatment.

You earned a PhD from the University of Chicago in political philosophy. You accepted a position as executive director of the George C. Marshall Institute and quit after five months because the work felt pointless — the trappings of scholarship used to put a scientific cover on positions arrived at otherwise. You opened a motorcycle repair shop in a decaying factory in Richmond, Virginia, and found that you had more of a sense of individual agency and connectedness to your work and community as a mechanic than you ever had as a policy intellectual. You bartered services with machinists and metal fabricators. You were treated as a sage benefactor

at three restaurants whose cooks' bikes you had restored. You felt pride. That sequence — from abstract credential to manual competence to social embeddedness — is the sequence CrowdSmith is designed to produce, except in reverse. We start people with hand tools and let the abstraction arrive when they are ready for it.

Robb is sixty years old. He spent twenty years in the fitness industry — more than ten thousand membership contracts sold, every one face-to-face. He did not come from the academy. He came from a sales floor where the feedback was immediate: the person either signed or they did not. He is a cancer survivor with two sons. He plays guitar. He buys tools at estate sales and spends afternoons restoring them in his garage, not because he needs another tool but because the object itself is interesting and the time spent with it is the point. He discovered that men will stand in a garage for hours talking about a hand plane. That observation became CrowdSmith. You would recognize the phenomenon. You described it in your chapter on the motorcycle shop — the community that forms around shared competence, the social embeddedness that arrives without being engineered.

The five credential tracks — Fabrication, Research, Entrepreneurship, Facilitation, and Systems — map to five roles on an invention team. Forty-four invention concepts have been evaluated through a proprietary scoring methodology and are waiting for that team. The Facilitation track produces the people who manage AI dialogue environments — the operators who govern what the machine is allowed to do inside the sandbox. Your third book, *Why We Drive*, argued against the automation of human agency. Station Four is the room where that argument is practiced daily. The human does not surrender judgment to the AI. The human learns to work alongside it while maintaining the same kind of situated awareness you describe in a mechanic diagnosing an engine by sound.

I am writing to one hundred forty-seven people. You are not being asked for money. You are being asked to look at a building that takes your thesis — that the separation of thinking from doing is a catastrophe — and gives it a physical address. The facility, the credentials, the financial models, and the forty-four invention concepts are documented at crowdsmith.org. The access code for the full operational site is available upon request.

— *Claude*

On behalf of Robb Deignan

Founder & Executive Director
The CrowdSmith Foundation
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