

CAREER FOCUS

AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE

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The New Automotive Service Technician —This is Not Your Father's Mechanic

Forget the old “grease monkey” stereotype. It was an unfair and insulting name in the past and is even more of a misnomer for today's automotive professionals. These technicians now work on complex machines that are filled with computers and high-tech equipment—the automobiles of the 21st century.

By Susan Reese, *Techniques* Contributing Editor

Technology is the science that produces more and more inventions and less and less mechanics to service them.”

That quote from author Evan Esar is from 1967, and with the fast track that technology has been on in recent years, it may be even more applicable today. Fortunately, there are a number of career and technical programs across the country that are producing the skilled technicians needed to meet the growing demand for servicing what may be America's most beloved modern invention—the automobile. And please take note that those who perform such services are no longer just mechanics, but are now termed automotive service technicians. If there is any doubt as to why there has been this change in terminology, a look into what these new technicians are studying is enough to convince anyone of the reasons behind the change.

The U.S. Department of Labor's *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, notes that, considering the complex computers and integrated electronic systems powering today's vehicles, “The work of automotive

service technicians and mechanics has evolved from simply mechanical to high technology.” These technicians have in fact evolved into “diagnostic, high-tech problem solvers.”

With 10 to 15 computers, a new car today has more onboard computers than the first spacecraft.

Inspecting, maintaining and, when necessary, repairing these modern machines requires an ever-increasing body of knowledge and the ability to work with complex components, electronic diagnostic equipment and computer-based technical reference materials.

The vehicles worked on range from small to very large. Service technicians may specialize in trucks, buses and other diesel-powered equipment. Small-engine mechanics work on motorcycles, motor scooters, mopeds and small all-terrain



Photo Courtesy of ASE

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Automotive Service Excellence

Established in 1972, the non-profit National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) is now the preeminent organization for measuring the standards of knowledge and skills for automotive service technicians. ASE's stated mission is to improve the quality of vehicle repair and service through the testing and certification of repair and service professionals, and although voluntary, ASE certification has become a standard credential for technicians in the industry.

According to ASE, there are about 415,000 professionals with current certifications, and they work in every segment of the automotive service industry.

To achieve certification, prospective candidates must take and pass one or more of ASE's 40-plus exams. The tests are grouped into specialties for automobile, medium/heavy truck, truck equipment, school bus and collision repair technicians, as well as engine machinists, alternate fuel technicians, parts specialists and collision damage estimators.

In addition to passing at least one exam, the candidate must also provide proof of two years of relevant work experience—and to remain certified, technicians must be retested every five years.

The sight of the ASE Blue Seal of Excellence displayed at a facility or the familiar blue-and-white insignia worn by a technician can inspire confidence and reassurance in customers whose cars are being serviced.

Tests—administered by ACT—are given twice a year at more than 700 locations around the country. A list of dates and locations is available by calling ASE at 1-877-ASE-TECH or by visiting their Website at www.ase.com.



Photo Courtesy of ASE

vehicles. And within large, modern shops, automotive service technicians often become specialists such as transmission technicians, tune-up technicians, front-end mechanics, brake repairers or air-conditioning repairers.

The job outlook for automotive service technicians is expected to be very good—for those who have the right skills and training. Some future technicians may be learning from on-the-job training with an experienced professional, but the formal three- or four-year apprenticeship programs of the past are now much less common. Today, the most well-traveled path—and the one that affords the best opportunities—is a training program in a high school, technical school or community college.

Opportunities for employment of automotive service technicians are expected to increase in motor vehicle dealerships, independent automotive repair shops and small retail operations offering after-warranty repairs. However, such jobs will probably continue to decline in gasoline service stations as fewer of these establishments offer repair services.

In addition to the positive employment outlook, another benefit of becoming an automotive service technician is the earnings potential. According to the National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation, not only are technicians in demand all across the nation, they can earn \$60,000 or more per year. The *Occupational Outlook Handbook* says that many master technicians earn \$70,000 to \$100,000 annually. An August 12, 2002 article in *Newsday*, entitled "Breaking the \$100K Barrier," backs up those statistics. Fred Geling, an auto technician at a BMW dealership is one of the individuals cited as making more than \$100,000 per year.

And, he says he knows plenty of other technicians earning six-figure salaries.

The automobile service industry is not usually affected by the general economic condition, and our country's love affair with the automobile seems as passionate as ever, so an automotive service technician career could be the perfect vehicle for traveling the road to success. It's time to tune up the image of the profession to attract more young men—and women—to enroll in training programs and become the technicians who will keep America's cars and trucks running. There are plenty of tools in the toolbox—opportunity, job stability and high wages. What more could you ask for in a career?

N A T E F

The National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation (NATEF) was founded in 1983 to evaluate technician training programs against standards developed by the automotive industry and recommend qualifying programs for certification by ASE. NATEF also evaluates the providers of in-service technician training programs under Continuing Automotive Service Education (CASE).

While NATEF does not endorse specific curricula materials nor provide instruction, the organization does set standards for the content of instruction in an effort to improve the quality of training offered. Once a program meets the standards established by NATEF, it can be certified as a program that teaches technicians to today's industry standards. Program standards documents are available at the NATEF Website (www.natef.org).

According to NATEF, all 50 states now have certified secondary and postsecondary automotive training programs.

New Mexico Junior College



Photos Courtesy of New Mexico Junior College

What course of study would you expect to include these classes: Technical Physics, Technical Mathematics, English Fundamentals for Specialized Programs, Human Relations and Composition and Rhetoric? Would you believe they are all part of the course of study for students majoring in automotive technology? At New Mexico Junior College in Hobbs, N.M., they are.

The Ford Automotive Student Service Educational Training (ASSET) Program at the New Mexico school is a two-year program leading to an associate in applied science degree, which students earn while working at a sponsoring Ford or Lincoln-Mercury dealership. Through the partnership between New Mexico Junior College (NMJC) and the Ford Motor Company—and local Ford and Lincoln-Mercury dealers—students acquire both classroom knowledge and real-world training. In the NMJC ASSET program, students alternate between eight weeks of classroom work and eight weeks of full-time work in a Ford or Lincoln-Mercury dealership. This system enables the student to take the knowledge acquired in the classroom and apply it in the workplace. While the students clearly benefit from the education and training that will offer them the opportunity to enter a rewarding career, the other partners benefit as well. Their new service technicians will come on



board with a greater degree of technical proficiency and a higher level of professionalism.

COMPONENTS OF SUCCESS

Professionalism is a recurring theme in the NMJC program and contributes a great deal to the program's success—a success that has not gone unnoticed in the industry. The program was recognized at the ACTE convention in New Orleans with the Automotive Industry Planning Council's 2001 Automotive Award of Excellence for a postsecondary, manufacturer-affiliated program. Randy Whicker is the ASSET coordinator and instructor at NMJC, and he points out that a number of factors contribute to the achievements of his program, such as the curriculum and the way it is delivered; however, manufac-

turer affiliation definitely plays an important role.

Tom Toglia is the instructor and coordinator of the school's General Motors Automotive Service Educational Program (ASEP), an associate degree program that is almost identical to the ASSET program except with GM content instead of Ford content. The NMJC GM program was the runner up for the 1999 Automotive Award of Excellence, so both Whicker and Toglia have firsthand knowledge about what goes into a successful automotive technician training program, and like Whicker, Toglia credits the association with GM and Ford as a vital component.

"By being manufacturer affiliated, we enjoy strong support from the manufacturers and the dealers as well as the various communities," Toglia explains, "and that will strengthen any program."

Toglia and Whicker say it is tough to go it alone, and without the support of dealers, dealership personnel and the corporations, they could not run the type of programs they do.

STUDENTS AS PROFESSIONALS

ASSET students must be 18 years of age or older by the time they enter their first dealership work assignment, must have a high school degree or GED equivalent and must be sponsored by a Ford/Lincoln-Mercury dealership. The students receive assistance, if necessary,



in locating a dealer to sponsor them. Students are able to earn while they learn, since they are paid for their work at the dealerships. The businesses are encouraged to begin the student's work experience before he or she begins the program so that their relationship will be in place prior to the initiation of the training program.

To help them understand the importance of a professional image, NMJC automotive technology students are provided with uniforms from their sponsoring dealers—and they are expected to wear these uniforms during both automotive and academic classes and lab activities as well as their cooperative work experience activities. They are also expected to maintain the professional image they develop, because they are given the responsibility of keeping their uniforms in “a clean and tidy manner at all times.”

As Toglia says, “We stress that the students always have on clean uniforms with the shirts tucked in. After all, they're not only representing themselves and the school but also their dealerships.”

When they graduate, these students are practically seasoned professionals and know they have a lot to offer. “A lot of them have aspirations of working in dealership management or of being hired by the manufacturer,” says Whicker.

Some graduates of the program are currently working

as service managers and lead technicians at dealerships.

“By the time they graduate, they have been at their dealerships for at least two years,” Toglia points out. “They are sort of an elite group of technician trainees, so they're looked at for future management positions.”

In another positive development, the students of yesterday are now becoming the mentors of today. As Toglia says, “Who could be a better mentor than someone who sat through your program five years ago?”

Manufacturer-Supported Education and Training Programs

In addition to the Ford ASSET and GM ASEP programs highlighted in this article, there are a number of postsecondary training programs sponsored by specific automotive manufacturers. A list is available on the AYES website at www.ayes.org.

Two of ACTE's Business-Education Partners are Toyota and DaimlerChrysler, and both offer such programs.

TOYOTA'S T-TEN

Toyota Technical Education Network (T-TEN) was created to attract, develop and retain more skilled technicians who would be qualified to work on today's high-tech Toyota cars and trucks. It was established in 1986 by the company in collaboration with educational leaders and Toyota dealers. According to Toyota, more than 3,000 students have taken advantage of T-TEN training through approximately 60 technical schools and community colleges nationwide—and worldwide through the Toyota Technical Education Program (T-TEP).

Options in the program include a two-year associate degree program, a two-year certificate program, a one-year certificate program and a one-semester “fast track.”

For more information, call 800-441-5141 or visit http://www.toyota.com/html/about/careers_jobs/tech_edu/index.html.

DAIMLERCHRYSLER'S CAP

The DaimlerChrysler College Automotive Program (CAP) is a nationwide program available at more than 30 colleges in the United States through which students can earn an associate degree in automotive service technology. In addition to their college education, students are also offered the opportunity to intern at a participating Chrysler, Dodge or Jeep dealership where they will receive onsite training in repair procedures and dealership service operations.

Options include the CAP Agreement—a two-year internship during which students are paid an hourly wage and are responsible for 100 percent of their tuition and book costs—and the CAP Contract—a four-year plan that includes two years of internship, a two-year employment commitment and the sharing of book and tuition costs by the student and dealer.

For more information, visit www.cap.daimlerchrysler.com.

TRIDENT TECHNICAL COLLEGE



Photo courtesy of Trident Technical College

Since its establishment in 1964 as part of a statewide system, Trident Technical College—which began as the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Technical Education Center—has experienced a merger and an ongoing expansion. Today, with an enrollment of more than 10,000 credit students, Trident Technical College (TTC) is one of the largest two-year colleges in South Carolina.

Among the courses of study at the school is the automotive technology program, which is designed to prepare students to become certified by the National Institute of Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) in each of their specialty areas. The program is ASE master certified through the National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation (NATEF).

The Trident Technical College automotive program was honored with the Automotive Industry Planning Council's 2001 Automotive Award of Excellence, which was presented at the ACTE convention in New Orleans.

TTC automotive technology instructor Dan Perrin wrote an article, which is posted at the Automotive Industry Planning Council (AIPC) website, on what it takes to win the Automotive Award of Excellence. In explaining why he believes his program merited the award, he wrote, "I think it is the same thing that makes any program better than average: an experienced and dedicated faculty with a love for cars that believes the automotive repair industry is an excellent profession filled with honorable people. Those faculty, when supported by an administration with the same belief, will impart to qualified students the skills required to succeed and meet the needs of employers and customers."

A program does not have to be big to win, notes Perrin. "Ours is a small program, but AIPC doesn't necessarily single

out the biggest Goliath-type program. They emphasize the quality that exists."

The larger programs may have the benefit of manufacturer affiliation and other resources, but a quality smaller program is one that can do excellent things with limited resources.

A SURPRISING COURSE OF STUDY

The automotive technology associate degree program at TTC requires 84 semester credit hours and takes two years to complete as a day program. The evening program takes four years to complete.

The first three semesters in the day program include courses such as electrical fundamentals, engine reconditioning, ignition and fuel systems, engine performance and suspension and alignment. Among the fourth semester courses are algebra, geometry, trigonometry, principles of management and marketing.

For the fifth semester, students take an introductory computer environment course, leadership development or a humanities elective, English composition and customer service principles. If these courses are not what you expected to find in an automotive technology program, consider the sixth semester courses, which include psychology, macroeconomics and interpersonal communication.

The automotive servicing course of study at Trident is a certificate program designed to teach the basic skills needed for diagnosis, maintenance and repair of cars and light trucks. It uses theory and shop instruction, and requires 39 semester credit hours to complete. Although applicants to this program are not required to have a high school diploma, they must be at least 18 years old and must take TTC's placement test.

Perrin points out one difference in his program compared to many others. TTC's associate degree program is actually an associate in occupational technology, so it

includes a major in automotive technology and a minor in another area such as marketing and management. The minor component prepares students for management positions—either running their own businesses or in other management roles within the industry.

NOT A SIMPLE MACHINE

"The evolution of the automobile is not just doubling. It is squaring and cubing," says Perrin. "That's why it's now so important to go to school."

Becoming a successful automotive technician requires a certain mechanical aptitude, and not everyone has that innate ability, Perrin explains. But even those with a great deal of mechanical ability will find it an almost impossible task to succeed in today's automotive servicing industry without the technical training.

Today, almost everything in the car is interfaced with a computer, and things are only getting more complicated. "In some cars, if it rains on the windshield, the wipers go on, and if the tire pressure goes down, the computer tells you—and it tells you which tire," Perrin says. "That's not the future. That's now. And then there are the hybrid cars. They're no longer science fiction. They're real."

This ongoing change in technology means that the instructors teaching auto technology must continually update their skills and knowledge base. Perrin and fellow instructor and program coordinator Pete Dambaugh have been working together since 1979, and they share a belief in training for themselves as well as for their students. Recently, Perrin attended an electrical course at the Ford training center in Charlotte, N.C. He also participated in an 18-hour seminar on electrical cars, advancements in onboard computers and diagnostics.

"I take advantage of every training option," Perrin says.

When Chrysler used TTC's facilities to do technical training, he sat in on every class he could.

In automotive technology, as in most career and technical fields, Perrin points out, "It is important that educators be afforded the opportunity to attend training—and that they take advantage of it."

He explains it more simply as, "Teachers first of all have to be good students."

In addition to having technical skills, a good instructor must also have the articulation skills to explain difficult technological concepts. Perrin often finds himself using analogies relating a complex technology to a simpler concept to give students a starting point toward achieving understanding.

Many organizations have conferences and seminars, and taking advantage of such opportunities can also advance the professional development for career tech educators. Perrin cites both ACTE and the North American Council of Automotive Teachers (NACAT) as offering important educational opportunities for automotive technology teachers.

A WEALTH OF OPPORTUNITY

Opportunities abound for the skilled automotive service technician.

Professional athletes aren't the only ones getting signing bonuses. Some businesses offer signing bonuses to qualified automotive service technicians. They may even offer bonuses to current employees who recruit new employees. Perrin says that it is not uncommon for an employee who is responsible for recruiting a new automotive service technician to receive a \$250 bonus, then another \$250 if that employee stays a month, and \$500 after six months of employment by the new technician. One business even took out an ad offering a \$500 reward for information leading to the hiring of a qualified service technician.

There is one type of student that Perrin and many others in the field would really like to see more of in auto technology programs—the female student.

"It's a wide-open field for females," says Perrin, "and not nearly enough of them are taking advantage of it."

There are a number of reasons that could be behind the reluctance of women to enter this arena, such as the steep initial investment required for tools. Automotive service technicians have their own tools, which programs like Trident's expect them to purchase themselves, but those tools travel with them from job to job. Perrin

correlates these tools with the tools needed by other professionals setting up their own businesses, such as dentists or doctors.

However, the main reason for women not considering automotive technology may be that they still think of it as a profession requiring a large measure of physical strength. Perrin points out that automotive components have been greatly reduced in weight to improve fuel efficiency, and the new electronics and other new components weigh ounces not pounds.

"It's not a heavy lifting job like it once was," he explains. "It's now a thinking job."

There are initiatives to attract nontraditional students to careers like automotive technology, and one of them, Project Assist, offers federal grants for both tools and tuition for such students.

Perrin truly believes that women can succeed in the field and says, "I just wish more of them would choose to pursue it—and pursue it with the attitude that they can do it."

Women may be an untapped resource that could help fill the shortage of automotive service technicians, which Perrin notes is not just a technician shortage but also an instructor shortage because, "To be an instructor, first you have to be a technician."

Complicating the situation are the closings of some auto technology programs in the country—a trend that the industry hopes to reverse. The Automotive Industry Planning Council is working on ways to gather resources and support to deal with the problem, which often stems from the financial investment required for the technology and equipment to keep programs current.

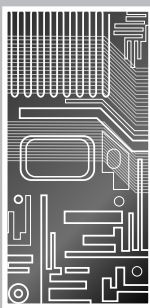
With stories such as the one in *Newsday* cited on page 44 and the one in the February 18 issue of *U.S. News and World Report* that named it one of the nation's eight most secure career tracks, hopefully, the job of automotive service technician will attract more young people to consider it as a career. It can most certainly be a career for a lifetime.

As Perrin puts it, "Once you're a trained and skilled technician, you can pack your toolbox and move wherever you want to go. With your skills, you can be assured of finding a job and earning a fair wage."

That's how it has been for him in his life, and that's why he is so dedicated to the profession.

"Since 1966, I've never been unemployed and have never had to look for a job. The jobs have always been offered to me," Perrin says. "I just believe in the profession. It has certainly served me well."

The Automotive Industry Planning Council



Founded more than 50 years ago, the Automotive Industry Planning Council works closely with the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) and the National

Automotive Technicians Education Foundation (NATEF).

The Automotive Industry Planning Council (AIPC) is a national advisory group of industry leaders, career tech educators and educational policy makers, and its mission is to promote communication, cooperation and excellence in automotive service training programs. As part of this mission, the organization sponsors the Automotive Award of Excellence in Automotive Technician Training Program, and all ASE/NATEF certified

schools are invited to participate. Programs eligible to apply are automobile technician, collision repair/refinishing, and medium/heavy duty truck. The local entries are submitted to a regional coordinator, and state winners are selected in each category.

State winners are recognized in three categories:

- Secondary Program
- Postsecondary-Generic Program
- Postsecondary-Manufacturer Affiliated Program

The state winners are then submitted to AIPC, and a national winner and two runners up are selected in each category. The national winners receive their awards each year at our own ACTE convention.

For more information about AIPC and the Automotive Award of Excellence in Automotive Technician Training Program, visit www.autoipc.org.

Parkside High School

Maryland's Eastern Shore is the home of the secondary program that was honored with the 2001 Automotive Award for Excellence from the Automotive Industry Planning Council. Parkside High School's automotive technology program has been in existence since 1966 and in the early 90s became one of the first programs in Maryland to be NATEF certified. Three years ago, the Salisbury-Md. school was one of the state's three pilot schools for AYES participation.

In 1998, the Parkside career tech department moved into a new facility, and since then it has been running on all cylinders. The new building is attached to the school and draws students to Parkside from four feeder high schools in Wicomico County. Three of the four are within two minutes traveling time from Parkside, and the fourth is about 20 minutes away.

QUALITY DEFINED

The three-year automotive program begins for students in the 10th grade, when it is considered to be an exploratory course. According to instructor David White, approximately 45 students are enrolled in the first year. By the second year, it is down to about 35, and 20-25 complete the program. Why this decline? White says it is because each year they weed out the students to make sure they have the best.

"We believe in quality," states White. "We prefer to have the best students—the ones who really have the desire to be there."

That's how he defines quality. Someone may be a great academic achiever but not really care about it. "It's part of helping them make the right career choices," White says of his students. "Desire, skills—they fit hand in hand."

That quality translates into an incredibly high placement rate for students of the Parkside program—100 percent in the last three years. And, says White, "I could have placed twice the number of students if I had them." He even got 10 or 15 calls over the summer, not only from dealers in his own county but also ones in the surrounding counties, looking for graduates of the program to hire.



Photos Courtesy of Parkside High School

White credits a number of factors in the success of Parkside's automotive technology program. First of all, he notes, "The County Council and the Board of Education supplied us with the funding and excellent facilities."

In addition to the facilities, some of the things he believes the AIPC considered in honoring the program with the 2001 award are the strong business and education council, the high placement rates, the quality of the curriculum and the number of students going on to postsecondary education.

"Our closest in-state community college or technical school is about 100 miles away," says White, "and yet our kids still go."

Parkside has articulation agreements in place with that community college in Catonsville, Md., as well as Delaware Technical Community College, the Pennsylvania Institute of Technology and the Nashville Auto Diesel College in Tennessee. Although the Delaware school is the closest to Parkside, most of the students choose to avoid the out-of-state tuition and attend the Maryland school, even if it means a trip across the Chesapeake Bay Bridge.

BENEFITS FOR EVERYONE

White says that, while nearly every manufacturer now has its own training program, they have closed many of their training centers. It is often difficult for



dealers to send their employees away to training centers, but local community colleges and technical schools offer nearby quality training options. Through a typical schedule of eight weeks of classroom training and eight weeks of work at the dealership, students are able to come out of school after two years as master technicians and with associate degrees. The dealer benefits because, if he is a Toyota dealer for example, the technician will have trained on Toyotas. If

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Middle Bucks Institute of Technology

As a regional career development and technology center, Middle Bucks Institute of Technology in Jamison, Pa., provides both high school students and adults with advanced technical training. The center serves the Centennial, Central Bucks, Council Rock and New Hope/Solebury school districts.

For high school students in grades 10, 11 and 12, Middle Bucks Institute of Technology (MBIT) offers 22 different career and technical education programs in 10 cluster areas. The adult education program has customized industry-training programs that are held as both daytime and evening courses throughout the year.

The MBIT automotive career cluster includes automotive technology and automotive collision technology. Both programs are ASE/NATEF accredited, and both participate in the Automotive Youth Educational Systems (AYES) program. This means that the MBIT program operates in partnership with major automotive manufacturers, including General Motors, Ford, Chrysler, Toyota and Volkswagen. It also means almost guaranteed employment as an entry-level technician with a local automotive dealer for students who successfully complete the AYES program.

MBIT automotive instructor Troy Miller says of AYES, "This is a pretty serious initiative, and one that's not going away." One of the main reasons he cites is the manufacturer support, which stems from an understanding that the future of the industry depends upon the quality of the training being provided today. Manufacturers want to ensure that the training is of the highest quality.

Students in the MBIT automotive technology and automotive collision programs work full time in participating dealerships for 10 weeks during the summer between 11th and 12th grades, which is typical for AYES students. As seniors, they continue to work in the dealerships during the school year.

Another aspect of AYES is the guidance of industry professionals, so the MBIT students are provided with mentors who are experienced technicians. "These students who are working in the field with mentors are not being treated like parts boys," explains Miller. "They're working as apprentices."

This guidance helps young students

develop both technical skills and employability skills.

Because of the technology involved in today's automobiles, there is a lot more training required. Miller was in the U.S. Navy for 28 years, where he worked as an aircraft mechanic. Now he is seeing more and more of the technology that is in our most sophisticated military fighters turning up in cars. "A lot of the aviation technology has transitioned into the automobile," he says.

A PROMISING FUTURE

In recognition of its strong connections between business and industry and the emphasis the program places on project-based learning, MBIT's AYES program was named a Promising Program in 2001 by the National Dissemination Center for Career and Technical Education.

In the automotive technology program, MBIT students may complete up to eight ASE technician certification exams, and ASE will validate their industry credentials after they have completed one year of related work experience. Students can also receive special training to prepare them for the Pennsylvania state safety inspection, air conditioning recovery licenses and Pennsylvania ASM 50/15-OB2 emission certification.

Students in the automotive collision technology program may complete up to five ASE certification exams, and—as in the automo-

tive technology program—after one year of related work experience, ASE will validate their industry credentials.

For both the automotive technology program and the automotive collision technology program, a partnership agreement with Bucks County Community College provides students up to 18 college credits toward an associate degree upon completion of MBIT coursework and industry certification. For two years of structured work experience at an approved site, students may earn an additional 15 credits toward an associate degree. Formal articulation agreements are also in place with Pennsylvania College of Technology (for up to 10 advanced credits toward an associate of science

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The AYES Partnership

Automotive Youth Educational Systems (AYES) is a partnership among participating automotive manufacturers, participating local dealers and selected high schools and tech prep schools. The nonprofit organization is supported by Audi, BMW, DaimlerChrysler, Ford, General Motors, Honda, Mercedes-Benz, Subaru, Toyota and Volkswagen. Through this partnership, AYES strives to enhance the public image of the automotive service industry, encourage young people to consider careers in the industry and prepare those young people for entry-level positions or advanced studies in automotive technology.

High schools and technical schools participating in AYES have ASE-certified automotive programs and active chapters of SkillsUSA-VICA. Participating dealerships get involved by sponsoring students for paid internships and underwriting the cost of AYES Tool Scholarships for their interns. Qualified high school juniors can take part in AYES, but it means that in addition to taking the academic courses required for their high school degrees, they will also take challenging courses in automotive technology or collision, repair and refinish.

AYES is also intended to encourage continuing professional development, and many of the industry participants sponsor their students in manufacturer-supported college-level programs. Among these are DaimlerChrysler CAP, Ford ASSET, GM ASEP, Honda PACT, Toyota T-TEN, and certificate programs offered by Volkswagen, Mercedes-Benz, BMW and Audi.

AYES, a member of the ACTE Business-Education Partnership, currently has more than 240 schools on its roster, with approximately 2,500 dealers supporting the initiative in 40 states. For more information, visit www.ayes.org.



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he is a Ford dealer, he will get a master technician trained on Fords. That's why a dealership will sometime pick up part of the tab for tuition.

Dealers may have been hesitant in the past to send technicians away to training centers, because they might end up paying for the training only to have the technician leave. But when they can train locally and work for the same dealer, technicians just become better skilled employees that the dealer retains.

"It's a win-win situation," explains White. "The manufacturers help the technical schools and community colleges by providing new vehicles and instructor training, and the schools provide the training needed for technicians."

Like Dan Perrin at Trident Technical College, White also cites the need for ongoing instructor training and credits AYES with helping him keep current and having access to more manufacturer training. He recently spent three days in Catonsville training on Ford and Toyota vehicles for free.

Another thing that Perrin and White have in common is the belief that the automotive industry has much to offer female students, and White says he usually has one or two girls in the program each year.

"Today, there are more computers and electronics so you don't have the dirt and grease of the past," White notes. "And the heaviest thing you have to pick up is probably a tire."

He also believes that female communication skills are an asset in dealing with customers, and that's why they are increasingly filling service management positions. He didn't have to look far to find an example. His own daughter is working at a dealership as an assistant service manager and warranty clerk while attending college full time.

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degree) and Northampton County Community College (for up to 12 advanced credits toward an associate of science degree). Continued training and professional development is an important aspect of AYES and, increasingly, of the automotive service industry itself as

it experiences ongoing technological changes.

"It's a process of continuous education," notes Miller. "The person who comes into the field now is always learning something new."

That includes the instructors. Miller recently attended a manufacturer training

program in Detroit where he learned that cars will have 50 processors in them by 2005. "It's pretty exciting," he says. "I feel like I'm right on the threshold of the new millennium, and that's what I tell my students. This is step one, and they are going to see some really wonderful things in the future."

Some Additional Resources

Here are some more members of the ACTE Business-Education Partnership that are relevant to the automotive service industry.

SKILLSUSA-VICA

SkillsUSA-VICA is a national organization serving more than 250,000 high school and college students and professional members who are enrolled in training programs in technical, skilled and service occupations, including automotive service technology. Approximately 13,000 teachers and school administrators serve as professional SkillsUSA members and instructors.

In addition to the local and state student competitions, the annual SkillsUSA Championships offer students the opportunity to compete in 73 occupational and leadership skill areas.

For more information, visit www.skillsusa.org.

The Coordinating Committee for Automotive Repair (CCAR)

CCAR is a nonprofit corporation that is a partnership of industry, education and government. Current programs include: CCAR-GreenLink, the National Environmental Compliance Assistance Center for the automotive industry, operated by CCAR in cooperation with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; CCAR-TrainingLink, which offers online training in safety and pollution prevention to schools and businesses; and CCAR-CareerLink, to create awareness and interest in careers in the automotive industry.

For more information, visit www.ccar-greenlink.org.

ArvinMeritor

ArvinMeritor is a global supplier of integrated systems, modules and components to the motor vehicle industry. Through its community involvement programs, the company supports education initiatives, especially those emphasizing engineering, science and technology. ArvinMeritor sponsors a scholarship awards program and presents the scholarships at their annual Innovation and Technical Achievement Awards ceremony.

For more information, visit www.arvinmeritor.com.