New Internship Program Debuts in St. Louis

EverGrain has four Ranken interns this year, including (L to R): Mason Smith, Jeremiah Dean, Benjamin Hayduk-Besse, and Kalei Kaneshiro.

In a facility under construction within the Anheuser-Busch InBev brewery complex in St. Louis, a new internship partnership has begun between Ranken Technical College and EverGrain, a plant-based protein and fiber product development company.

EverGrain uses spent barley waste from beer production to produce sustainable, nutritious ingredients for food and beverage industries. It is building a $100 million manufacturing plant in St. Louis, backed by funding from AB-InBev. As it gears up for full operations by next year, the company became aware of the success of Ranken’s microenterprise program in developing and nurturing skilled employees for various industries and wanted a way to tap into Ranken’s hands-on training programs.

“We wanted a microenterprise based at EverGrain where Ranken students could continue their education but also gain industry experience with us while still in school,” says EverGrain Maintenance and Capabilities Manager David O’Dell, who serves as an onsite mentor for Ranken interns. “We piloted our internship program last April with one student. It worked so well that we not only expanded the program to include more interns, we also have hired several full-time as of this past January.”

Ranken’s microenterprises typically are manufacturing and assembly lines that companies set up onsite at the College. Students are hired as paid interns, gaining real work experience while still in school. EverGrain’s program is a hybrid of the microenterprise model and the College’s integrated work-based internship model.

Michael Ratcliff, Ranken Graduate now works at EverGrain full time.

“It’s an opportunity for a closely mentored internship where students get paid while gaining valuable, on-the-job experience,” says Ranken’s microenterprise director Vince Holtmann. “They are assigned a mentor and work on a variety of projects at EverGrain. We’re proud that three of the first four students to complete their part-time internship at EverGrain were offered full-time positions.”

“One of our five-year strategic priorities is to develop new programs and industry partnerships so that students have more opportunities for training and employment,” says Ranken President Don Pohl. “This relationship with EverGrain is possible in large part thanks to the commitment and effort of one of our board members (and former chair), Jeff Pitts, who was the senior plant manager for Anheuser-Busch InBev and saw the potential of the educational partnership with EverGrain.”

Pitts talked with students in several Ranken programs, including Control Systems Technology, Electric Systems Design Technology, Electrical Automation Technology, Industrial Technology, and Information Technology.

“I have been working on the EverGrain protein plant project since its inception,” says Pitts. “With my experience and relationship with Ranken, it just seemed like a perfect fit, to bring the project’s technical needs together with Ranken’s ability to train and develop technically skilled workers.”

Michael Ratcliff, 21, was a student in the Control Systems Technology Program when he heard Pitts speak about EverGrain. He was the first student intern hired at EverGrain. “What impressed me was the company’s focus on sustainability; they are taking a waste product and making it useful,” he says. When he graduated, Ratcliff was hired by Aerotek Recruiting to work at EverGrain full-time, where he is now an Operator Technician drawing a highly competitive salary and helping to write a training guide for the company’s human machine interfaces and control systems.

“I went from not being able to afford a traditional college or knowing a career path to going to Ranken and obtaining scholarships and hands-on training for an amazing career, Ratcliff says. “Not only was I able to get my degree, but I had access to internships that helped me gain more skills so I could get a great full-time job.”

www.ranken.edu  Page 1
2022 SkillsUSA District Championship Held at Ranken

Medals presented at the SkillsUSA District Championship.

For the 15th year in a row, Ranken Technical College hosted the SkillsUSA District Championship. The event was held on March 1st with 106 students from five regional high schools, technical schools and colleges participating, including Ranken. Local industry experts oversaw and helped to judge the skills contests. SkillsUSA is a national organization that focuses on improving the quality, training, and development of a skilled workforce. Students competed in 11 different skills competitions at the District Championship. In addition to hosting, Ranken awarded $37,500 in scholarships to potential Ranken students. Twenty-two Ranken students who competed at the District Championship excelled and are advancing to the Missouri State SkillsUSA Championship.

Architectural rendering of the Ranken Southeast location in Perryville, Mo.

The program, which replicates Ranken’s two-year Automotive Collision Repair apprenticeship model in other colleges across the country, is currently in four schools: Ranken-St. Louis, College of Lake County in Grayslake, Ill., Contra Costa College in San Pablo, Calif., and Texas State Technical College in Waco, TX.

The new funding will strengthen the existing program and help establish four more locations over the next three years. The national CEP is a partnership between Ranken and Enterprise Holdings Foundation to increase the workforce demands for collision repair specialists. Says Ranken President Don Pohl, “We are tremendously proud that our model has been recognized as the gold standard for connecting hands-on industry experience with education.”

Ranken Southeast - Perryville

Architectural renderings now show the vision for the new Ranken Southeast location in Perryville, Mo. Last year, the State of Missouri allocated $5 million to build a new home for Ranken, which has been housed in space donated by TG Missouri Corporation since 2017. “We are hoping to break ground on the Perryville Technical Education Campus (PTECH) in late February or early March, says Perryville City Administrator Brent Buerck. “This state-of-the-art facility, located prominently along Highway 51 near the industrial park, will provide first-class training for our world-class industry partners and provide Ranken a permanent place to call home in Perryville, Missouri.” Community leaders also are pursuing federal and local funding to complete the anticipated project cost.

Ranken - St. Louis

The Educational Credit Management Corporation (ECMC) Foundation approved a request by Ranken Technical College for a $700,000 grant to support the expansion of the national Collision Engineering Program (CEP).

Student competing in the SkillsUSA District Championship.

Collision engineering technology students at College of Lake County in Grayslake, Ill., prep a vehicle before it moves to the paint booths to be refinshed. The students are enrolled in the national CEP started by Enterprise Holdings Foundation and Ranken.
Career Path Spotlight: Industrial Engineering Technology

What’s a perfect career for someone who wants to be a multi-skilled technician? Industrial engineering technician. The U.S. Labor Department notes that demand for this career is increasing as workers retire and technology becomes more complex. Not enough students are entering this career path pipeline to meet the demand. Ranken is approached weekly by a new company seeking industrial engineering technicians. By embedding internships in this program, these companies have realized they can benefit by getting newly skilled technicians sooner, while also helping to develop a technician that fits their culture.

The Industrial Engineering Technology (IET) program is offered at Ranken St. Louis and Ranken Southeast in Perryville, Mo. As a Department of Labor approved apprentice program, students will rotate between on-campus classes with four or eight-week internships for five semesters. Students will take coursework designed to prepare them with a variety of skills to maintain and repair factory equipment and industrial machinery. Topics will include mechanical systems, pneumatics, hydraulics, electrical systems, electronic systems, programmable logic controllers (PLCs), motor drive systems, welding, and piping, including safety as a top priority throughout the program. IET is more comprehensive, adding further in-depth instruction into electrical systems and applications. This program has simulators to gain hands-on experience and has added an advantage of rotating students through paid integrated work-based internships. IET students also earn several National Institute of Metalworking Skills (NIMS) national credentials, another plus for future employers.

“We have both four- and eight-week paid integrated work-based internships for students electing the IET pathway,” says IET Interim Department Chair Mark Malcinski. “Students currently are rotating through several regional companies, including Agru-Systems, Atlas Roofing, Flex-Line Automation, Midwest Sterilization, Red Bud Industries, and TG Missouri.”

Everything from safety to basic rigging, interpreting technical drawings, and maintenance of mechanical, hydraulics, pneumatics, piping, and electrical systems is taught, as well as the basics of maintenance welding and precision measuring. “The more you know, the more valuable you are to a company,” says IET Instructor Leah Sueme. “Having the multi-skilled education can open several doors that would otherwise be inaccessible or take you much longer to get to in your career. Our program really allows students the opportunity to develop the strengths and find the path that really interests them.”

Both Malcinski and Sueme are Ranken alumni who previously worked in industry but have returned to Ranken to help educate the next generation. Says Malcinski, “Industrial engineering technicians are often the backbone of industry, helping to keep things running smoothly. It’s a rewarding and diverse career path. With this skilled career, you should never be out of work.”

Shadow-A-Tech Programs Draw Students IN!

Maggie Mathes says a hands-on opportunity to shadow Ranken students during her senior year in high school made the difference in why she selected the College while exploring options for a diesel technology program.

“It was a big selling point for me,” she says. “I was looking at another technical school but was very impressed in how much hands-on training exposure you got here.”

Mathes is one of many individuals who participate in Shadow-A-Tech days at Ranken, which are held on Wednesdays and Thursdays on the first and second weeks in February, March, April, July, October, November, and December. Says Mathes, “My day was a lot of fun! I got to work with another female student who was replacing valve guide seals on a Cummins ISX, 15-liter engine. She explained why the seals were being replaced and I even got to help her remove the old seals and install new ones under her supervision.”

Frank Miller, Dean of Enrollment Management, says the hands-on exploration is a long-standing and valuable recruiting tool.

“Shadow-A-Tech is kind of like a try-it-before-you-buy-it, where participants can be a Ranken student for half a day to explore a career path,” he says. “They talk with students and instructors and get involved in classes. The benefit is to show them what hands-on learning at Ranken entails and show off our amazing facilities and equipment.”

“Shadow-A-Tech in our Diesel Technology in Perryville allows a person to work with other full-time students, in a live shop at Glister Mary Lee, working on anything from engines to brakes,” says instructor Brien Dover. “We allow them to use their thought process to try to help diagnose a certain problem and they love it! They feel like they are one of the team and get a sense of accomplishment when a solution is found, or a job is completed. They usually want to stay longer than the allotted time because they have a great time!”

Mathes is now in her second semester of the four-semester Diesel Technology Program and works part-time after class hours in a paid position with Glister Mary Lee. “My father is a diesel technician for a big shipping company, and I’ve been working around trucks and diesel engines since I was very young,” she says. “Mr. Dover told me I will learn something new every day that I attend class. I truly feel that after I complete this program, I’ll be ready to enter this trade well-prepared.”

Shadow-A-Tech is available for Automotive, IT, Electrical, Construction, Manufacturing. Learn more at - https://ranken.edu/shadow-2/
Highly skilled, quality-minded, and a great team leader. That’s how Katie Beck Schuler is seen in the field of automotive collision repair by her general manager and team at Car Craft Auto Body in Hazelwood, Mo. Schuler, the Lead Refinish Technician at Car Craft, was promoted into her position after starting as a new member of the company’s paint team in 2018.

“She persevered by keeping focused, cross-training with her peers and attending advanced industrial coatings and refinishing training with PPG Industries in Kansas City,” says Phil Meier, General Manager for Car Craft Auto Body. “She worked her way up the ladder by showing great work ethic, pride in her work quality, and determination. When Car Craft acquired a fifth location in Hazelwood in December 2019, we offered her the role of lead refinish technician.”

Schuler has been impressing ever since she started in Ranken’s Automotive Collision Repair (ACR) Technology Program. She dove into collision repair and competed in multiple SkillsUSA Championships while working on her degree. In 2012, she earned First Place at the State SkillsUSA Championships in Auto Collision. In 2013, before she graduated, she took First Place in Auto Refinishing at the District SkillsUSA Championship as well as Third Place in Auto Collision at the state competition. “The skills I learned while at Ranken and through SkillsUSA are among my favorite memories while going to college,” Schuler says.

John Heltbrand, former ACR department chair, saw Katie’s determination firsthand. “People around her knew if it had to get done, it was going to get done,” he recalls. “When she did something, she followed through to the end. She was respected by her classmates and mentored other ladies that were in the collision and automotive programs at the time.”

She was hired immediately upon graduation, first by Schaefer Auto Body and then Plaza Motors Collision Center and Car Max before joining Car Craft Auto Body four years ago.

Today, Schuler is married and has two children. She says Ranken’s hands-on training enabled her to reach her dream of refinishing vehicles and progressing through the industry. “Ranken gave me the skills and it also taught me to have a good work ethic – to be punctual, self-disciplined, and to never give up,” she says. “It’s been a great career; one that other family members also have pursued. I’m proud to have gone to Ranken and proud that I continue to learn new things every day to advance my skills.”
Industry Partner Spotlight:
Plaza Motors Collision Center

For more than a decade, Plaza Motors Collision Center has collaborated with Ranken to train automotive collision repair specialists. With the creation of Ranken’s unique rotating integrated internship model several years ago, Plaza Collision now is an integral partner in offering paid apprenticeships to students as they move through Ranken’s curriculum.

“I think the embedded internships are great and they allow students opportunities for actual real-world experience,” says Dave Forsythe, a 1987 alum and now a certified Audi and Land Rover Collision Repair Technician with Plaza.

Collision Repair Instructor Timothy Green, also an alumnus of the program, says, “We have 20 students involved in internship rotations. Students learn from good mentors and things might click one day in the shop while they are watching someone work or when their mentor shows them another way to do things.”

ACR student Raymond Kline agrees. He gets hands-on training at Ranken and then rotates through the Plaza Motors Collision Center, learning beside seasoned repair technicians such as Forsythe. Plaza Collision General Manager Kevin Chadwick notes that internships open the doors to a rewarding career opportunity. “The skill level of a technician will be accelerated during this program by two years,” he says. “They only have to apply themselves, because the jobs are in demand!”

Donor Spotlight:
Hydromat

Meeting the demand for a skilled machining workforce has led to a long-standing and strong partnership between Ranken Technical College and Hydromat, an engineering firm that manufactures precision rotary transfer machines and mill/turn machining centers. Since 1992, the company has been an annual and significant contributor to major capital and scholarship campaigns at Ranken as well as to the college’s Advanced Precision Machining Technology (APMT) Program. In addition, multiple in-kind machine and material donations have enabled our students to get a jump on real-world skills needed in the workplace.

Tyler Young, 2017 Ranken Graduate has been working at Hydromat for 5 years.

“Ranken aligns well with our work culture, with similar work ethic standards and skills development processes,” says Ken Bruce, Hydromat’s Apprenticeship Supervisor. “We see that students and graduates have the necessary skills and theoretical understanding so that they can hit the ground running when they come here.”

“We are incredibly grateful for the critical partnership we have with Hydromat to help train our students in real-world skills,” says Brian McCarthy, Ranken’s director of major gifts. “The generosity of the company to also fund scholarships and support the APMT program with in-kind donations is a wonderful legacy that has impacted so many students who will become the next generation of workers.”

Of the 200 employees at Hydromat, almost 40 are Ranken alumni, including many now in leadership roles. “You can definitely advance in our company with the foundation of skills learned at Ranken and here at Hydromat,” says Bruce. “We both give students and apprentices all the hands-on and critical thinking skills they need to excel in the workforce. These are core foundational skills that will enable them to be successful wherever they go. I truly can say that together, we give trainees a skillset for a lifetime.”
We Appreciate Your Support!

Thanks to many of you, Ranken Technical College can offer many merit and need-based scholarships to our students. This is vital to ensuring that there is a growing pool of next-generation skilled workers.

Please consider supporting our mission and the students who are seeking skilled technical training careers. With your donation, we can fund even more scholarships, which are urgently needed.

Scan this QR code or visit Ranken.edu and click on “Support Ranken” today!