

Ensuring The Quality and Rigor of Skilled Technical Training

The need for more skilled technical workers has reached critical levels. National statistics note that a half a million more skilled building and construction workers are needed. By the year 2030, estimates point to 2.1 million unfilled jobs in the manufacturing sector. Demands for skilled and knowledgeable workers in automotive maintenance and repair keep rising.

Ranken's long-standing vision is to be the leader in skilled technical education. While competition continues to rise to train the next generation of skilled workers, Ranken is widely recognized for its quality of education and the rigor of its hands-on curriculum, which has resulted in record attendance at its job fairs for graduates and increasing numbers of participating companies in its integrated work-based apprenticeship programs.

This year, Ranken has broadened its leadership team to focus on key aspects of education quality. "We have a new Dean of Academic Affairs, Dave Cadle, who is working with industry leaders and our faculty to ensure that newer, advanced technology is continuously added to our shops and is incorporated into the curriculum across all campuses," notes Shannon Brueggemann, Vice President for Education. "These dynamic conversations ensure that our students have the skills necessary, not only for today's technical jobs, but also for tomorrow's."

Ranken also has added a second instructional coordinator to its leadership team. Charles Corrigan, former division chair of Information Technology, has been with Ranken for more than 30 years. He now works with faculty in Ranken's outlying locations (Perryville, Wentzville, Troy and soon, Ashland) to maintain education quality as well as identify potential success barriers and re-design curriculum and teaching styles to create better student success pathways. Corrigan joins Julia Bradshaw, a long-time instructional coordinator and former online course instructor, who is responsible for

faculty and curriculum development on the St. Louis main campus as well as in Ranken's online courses, which are growing in popularity in degree tracks such as Application & Web Development Technology.

(HLC) in June as part of its 10-year accreditation. HLC accreditation is the leading standard for colleges and universities and acknowledges excellence in academic programs and services. Earlier, HLC review-



Ranken's emphasis on quality of education and student support gets high marks from accrediting institutions as well as employers.

"The entire team is hyper-focused on enabling our faculty to deliver the education and the skills that industry leaders have come to expect from a Ranken graduate," explains Brueggemann. "In our spring job fairs in April, we had more than 450 companies participate, and many of our students had jobs lined up before they graduated. That's a true testament that we are providing high quality, relevant education."

Ranken undergoes a mid-way assurance review by the Higher Learning Commission

ers noted that Ranken was "serious about technical education" and that they could "feel that commitment when they stepped on campus."

"We must maintain a continuous quality improvement mindset to meet the needs of industry," Brueggemann says. "I believe we can continue to show the HLC that not only are we serious about technical education, but we also excel at it." **R**



Employees with Toyota Motor Manufacturing Missouri start customized workforce training on pneumatics systems and motor controls with Ranken.

Customized Workforce Training for Toyota

Toyota Motor Manufacturing Missouri (TMM) in Troy, Mo., is the latest company to turn to Ranken for custom-designed, advanced workforce skills development programs. More than 100 Toyota employees will enroll in a pneumatics systems and motor controls program designed to enhance their on-the-job skills. TMM employees also have an opportunity to earn a certificate in Industrial Technology as part of the training. Keyvan Gerami, Ranken's Dean of Continuing Education, says it's a priority to assist industries in advancing skills in their own workforces. "We've offered programs that can lead to the development of advanced skills or specific industry certifications, such as FANUC robotics certifications," he says. Customized workforce training can either be completed in a single day or be developed into highly specific multi-week curriculum as needed by each company.

Rat Rod Build with Wrenching for the Future

Can you build a rat rod in less than five days? Yes, you can! Ranken Technical College faculty and students were proud to be part of Wrenching for the Future's (WTF) rat rod build earlier this year. WTF is a national organization that promotes skilled trades and

technical education and teaches individuals how to work with their hands through exciting activities, including the Rat Rod



Students and volunteers with Wrenching for the Future creating a rat rod out of an old Dodge truck.

Build in a Week challenge. Students are guided by WTF volunteers throughout the build and gain valuable problem-solving and creative thinking skills. WTF volunteers came to Ranken from Missouri, Texas, Tennessee, Minnesota, Iowa, and Nebraska.

"They worked with our students on a 1937 Dodge pick-up that was pulled out of a Kansas field in non-working condition," says Robert Callanan, chair of Ranken's Automotive Division. "Typical of a build like this, the team grabbed parts from everywhere – they put a 1967 Camaro sub-frame that was narrowed to fit the frame of the truck under the front end, did a disc-brake conversion, put a coil-over suspension on the back, and added a fuel-injected LS engine and a 4 L80E transmission inside. They even made custom leather seats."

About 75 students worked on the project at varying times throughout the week, all learning welding, fabrication, and other automotive skills. Ranken also donated some parts, including the engine and a custom drive shaft to complete the build.

"It was a blast and exhausting at the same time!" said WTF's Roger Quast. "The people, the students and Ranken staff all came together in four and half days to do something at a level that hasn't been done before I don't think. I couldn't be prouder of the team. I'm looking forward to the next two builds – one in Kansas and another at Ranken."

WTF posted live Facebook videos throughout the build. After showcasing the truck nationally, WTF will raffle it off



Ranken's Auto Club provides opportunities for students across Ranken's campus to get involved in automobile projects.

to help fund scholarships for area students interested in automotive careers. Adding to the excitement, Ranken held its annual Automotive Day on the last day of the build to showcase its automotive programs to 275 prospective students from local vocational schools and high schools. Thirty automotive companies also participated in the day to highlight employment opportunities.

Revving Up Ranken's Auto Club

Dozens of students from across Ranken as well as alumni are getting involved in the College's Auto Club. The club, revitalized in 2021, includes students from several Automotive programs as well as students in Information Technology, Industrial Engineering Technology, and Advanced Manufacturing and Precision Machining programs. With faculty mentors, students work on cars for show and racing. The club is a voluntary extension of classwork, but it has enhanced work synergy between several departments at Ranken. Members of the club work on and support the popular Ranken Z06 Corvette drift car at World Wide Technology Raceway and other tracks in the Midwest. Alumni are always welcome to return to Ranken and be a part of the Auto Club. **R**

Spotlight on Automotive Careers



Students in Ranken's automotive programs not only earn associate degrees, but also have the opportunity to earn multiple industry credentials.

From automotive and diesel maintenance to collision repair and high-performance racing, Ranken is a regional powerhouse for automotive career training. The College offers multiple career paths for students who either earn an associate degree in the full-time day program or a certificate by enrolling in evening classes.

"We continually work with our dealership and industry partners in automotive maintenance and repair to keep our curriculum up-to-date on the latest technologies," says Automotive Division Chair Robert Callanan. "For example, we added hybrid vehicle certification training to the automotive maintenance curriculum because of the strong growth and demand for such vehicles on the road."

And while high performance racing technology gets some students ramped up for work on high performance engines, the professional and certified dealership service and maintenance technician programs offered in partnership with auto manufacturers are extremely popular. Ranken serves as a training hub for General Motors' Automotive Service Education Program (ASEP), Ford's Automotive Student Service Educational Training (ASSET) program, Honda's Professional Automotive Career Training (PACT) program, and Toyota/Lexus' Technicians

Education Network (TTEN) training program. All have integrated work-based apprenticeships at area dealers embedded into the program and students learn in eight-week cycles of hands-on training at Ranken and paid internships at the dealerships' service or collision centers.

High Demand for Graduates

Students who successfully complete the programs are in high demand. TechForce, a nonprofit organization focused on increasing the number of students in technical education and careers, estimates that between 2022 and 2024, the demand for automotive, diesel, collision, and aviation technicians will approach nearly one million positions. Despite the demand, the organization notes that the number of new technicians entering the workforce is declining. The key, it notes, is to increase awareness of well-paying careers in automotive maintenance and repair.

Diesel Technology

In the field of diesel technology, Ranken operates its own large diesel education facility at Ranken West-Wentzville and partners with regional trucking companies to provide integrated work-based apprenticeships. In a novel education model through Ranken

Southeast in Perryville, Mo., however, the College is rapidly being recognized for its partnership with Gilster-Mary Lee Corporation. There, Ranken provides instructors and the curriculum for the Diesel Maintenance Technology associate degree program and Gilster allows Ranken to run the program onsite at the company's own diesel maintenance facility. It also offers paid internships to students in the program. Already, other companies have expressed an interest in setting up similar onsite educational partnerships to help meet workforce needs.



Certified dealership and maintenance technician programs offer students opportunities for paid internships at automotive companies while completing their degree at Ranken.

"What sets our program apart is that we have a strong work ethic component built into the curriculum," says automotive department chair Ronald Raines. "Our graduates have 100% job placement once they successfully earn their degree or certificate."

He adds that, in some cases, if students earn degrees in both automotive maintenance and collision repair (4 years total), they can "write their own ticket" for a highly paid, rewarding career. Says Callanan, "Students who have a passion for vehicles have multiple options to make it a lifelong career and at Ranken, we work directly with industry leaders to ensure they have the skills they need to be successful."

For more information about Ranken's wide range of automotive career pathways, visit Ranken.edu. **R**

Benjamin Schneider, IT and Media Specialist at UNCOMN and Founder of Cars and Coffee St. Louis



Cars and Coffee St. Louis attendees at Fast Lane Classic Cars looking around a brightly colored 2018 Lamborghini Huracan Performante and a 2022 Porsche Cayman GT4 RS. This event takes place every 2nd Saturday of the month.

With a long-standing passion for cars and a burgeoning career in information technology, Ben Schneider has been able to carve out a unique niche in the St. Louis automotive scene. Schneider, a 2015 graduate of the College's Internet and Web-based Technology program, is the founder of Cars and Coffee St. Louis, a wildly popular automotive organization in the region that has more than 15,000 car enthusiasts who share their love of automobiles and get together at large-scale events to swap stories and showcase their rides.

"My childhood was full of car shows, air shows, boat shows and construction equipment," he says. "I used my first computer to learn everything I could about the interesting vehicles I obsessed over as a child."

What he and eventually those around him noticed, was Schneider's innate ability to learn and use information technology (IT). In high school, he started his own computer repair business and eventually learned how to code. "When I discovered the internet, I was mesmerized," Schneider recalls. "It gave me this overwhelming sense of freedom and motivation to teach myself what I became passionate about."

His father, also a Ranken grad, convinced Schneider to check out IT programs. Ranken's curriculum suited his desire for hands-on learning. Evan Gudmestad, the department chair of Internet and Web-Based

Technology, noticed Schneider's skills and connected him to an internship at UNCOMN (formerly Aegis Strategies), located just outside of Scott Air Force Base in Illinois. "The company has public and private sector clients," Schneider says. "The majority of our contracts are with the Department of Defense, including the United States Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM)."

What began in the internship 8 years ago, first in research and development,

expanded into a full-time job on UNCOMN's internal IT support team. "The IT skills learned at Ranken gave me so much more value in my growing role," says Schneider.

In his down time, Schneider wanted to find places where he could look at and talk about cars. He bought a sports car and tried to find local car shows to attend. He quickly found that such information was relatively non-existent to anyone not in a private car club. Using his IT skills and putting on his entrepreneurial hat, Schneider learned video editing, graphic design, and social media marketing to create carsandcoffeestl.org. It's now a major hub for car show information in the greater St. Louis region and has blossomed into weekly car events.

His employer took note, and Schneider's role at UNCOMN has evolved from technical IT specialist to media specialist to tap into those same skills. "I work both at UNCOMN and in my own endeavors at the intersection of media and IT," he says excitedly. "Ranken prepared me with the skills and the know-how to grab opportunities that come my way. At UNCOMN, I may be creating graphics for a social media campaign or building an HTML landing page for a new piece of software that we're launching. I enjoy the variety!"

He adds, "At Ranken, I left college with not only a diploma, but the hard skills, discipline, and confidence to chase my dreams. If there was any skill that would allow me to build my own dreams, it would be the ability to master information technology. I've been able to use that skill both in my professional career and to expand my love for cars." **R**



Ben Schneider guiding an Audi R8 GT into a "Supercar Sunday" show held at a private car condominium in Chesterfield, Missouri.

Spotlight on: Joe Machens Ford Missouri



Joe Machens Ford has a strong tie to Ranken Technical College through the Ford ASSET training program. Pictured (Left to Right): Jared Phillippe, Service Manager; Jacob Crum, technician, Class of 2017; Blake Forward, technician, Class of 2019; Asa Fischer, graduating soon in Class of 2023; Jacob Bailey, Service Advisor, Class of 2020; and Michael York, Director of Fixed Operations. Not pictured are Brodie Baker and Daniel Brown, who currently are in their first year of the Ranken ASSET program, and Miguel Browder who starts in the program later this year.

In Missouri, the Joe Machens Automotive Group looms large. It has ranked as the #1 volume dealer in the state for more than 20 years and today, the company represents 15 automotive domestic and import brands throughout mid-Missouri and has 11 locations with collision centers. Among them is Joe Machen Ford/Lincoln in Columbia, Mo., which has had an integrated work-based apprenticeship program with Ranken for years.

"The partnership with Ranken is nothing short of exceptional," says Michael York, Director of Fixed Operations for Joe Machens Ford/Lincoln Missouri. "We've had 100% retention of Ranken students who have gone through the Ford Automotive Student Service Educational Training (ASSET) program, and I credit that to the instructors and the commitment they have to instilling a strong work ethic in their students."

The Ford ASSET program is one of several dealer technician partnerships that Ranken is involved with to train the next generation of service technicians. All students are dealership-sponsored throughout their two-year training and move in eight-week cycles from hands-on training in Ranken's automotive program to on-the-job training with master service technicians at the dealerships.

Because Joe Machens Ford/Lincoln believes so strongly in the Ranken partnership, it goes a step further than just paying students for their time while on location. "We place our candidates as full-time employees with benefits from day one," says York. "I think we're the only ones that do that regardless of whether they are in the classroom or with us. That means those students can make more than \$33,000 a year while obtaining their associate degree at Ranken at the same time."

The company requires graduates to fulfill a two-year commitment to the dealership upon graduation from Ranken as part of the partnership, but York says all the graduates have remained with his company and have gone on to successful careers. "I have Ranken grads who make more than a six-figure salary with us now," he notes. "This has been a great partnership for us to fill our growing need for skilled technicians."

With a large body shop and a 50-bay service center in Columbia already, Joe Machens now is in the early stages of developing a new diesel maintenance and repair facility nearby. York is eager to pursue a stronger partnership with Ranken as that project develops. He has toured Ranken's diesel maintenance education facility in

Wentzville and the College's embedded diesel education program at Gilster-Mary Lee Corporation in Perryville. "Ranken is building a new location in Ashland, Mo., which is just 15 miles from our facilities in Columbia and Jefferson City," says York. "The Perryville program was amazing and very eye-opening. I'm interested in seeing if we can mirror that here in Columbia."

He adds, "We're right in the middle between St. Louis and Kansas City and we have a large demand for automotive and diesel technicians for everything from cars to light duty and heavy-duty haulers. We've had such success with Ranken, it makes sense to see where we can grow this training partnership for the benefit of both of us." **R**

2023 Scholarship Luncheon

Ranken was proud to honor recipients of scholarships and recognize the many donors who established and contributed to many scholarship funds at its annual Scholarship Luncheon. The event, held in mid-April, also is an opportunity for these students to meet those who support their dream of attending and graduating from Ranken.

If you are interested in establishing a scholarship fund or supporting students by contributing to a fund, please call 314-286-3602.



Ranken President Don Pohl congratulates scholarship recipients and thanks donors who attended this year's Scholarship Luncheon.

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