

Boeing Partners with Ranken for Applied Engineering Technology Apprenticeships

Full-Time Jobs Available for Successful Graduates

Boeing, a global aerospace manufacturer, has begun a new apprenticeship program with Ranken Technical College that is designed to train skilled workers for manufacturing engineering technician positions within the company.

The new Boeing Engineering Technician Apprenticeship (BETA) Program began in August 2023 and is offered at both Ranken St. Louis and Ranken West-Troy. It is an offshoot of Ranken's associate degree program in Applied Engineering Technology (APMT) Program," says Shannon Brueggemann, Vice President for Education at Ranken. "During the first semester, students will be given the opportunity to interview with Boeing to complete three onsite internships at the company as part of the new BETA program. About 75 percent of the program mimics our APMT degree but the rest is comprised of courses focused on communications skills development needed at Boeing to enhance collaboration between engineers and production workers."

The program has attracted a lot of interest. "Roughly 40 percent of the students attending open houses for the precision machining program had prior knowledge of the BETA program and asked for additional information," notes J.C. Owens, chairman of Ranken's APMT department and lead instructor for the BETA program. "While the integrated internship rotations are similar to what we offer in other Ranken degree programs, the selection process and on-the-job responsibilities for students in Boeing's program are significantly different."

"Throughout the four-semester associate degree program, students will gain practical experience in Ranken's machining shops as well as real-life production engineering experience through Boeing's Engineering Technician Apprenticeship (BETA) Program," says Joey Koenig, Senior Engineer Manager,

Quality Air Dominance at Boeing Defense, Space & Security. "Upon completion of the program selected participants will be offered full time employment with Boeing."

Boeing has long recognized the need for workforce development programs. In 2018,

Students accepted into the BETA program will gain practical experience in Ranken's machining shops and in Boeing facilities learning CNC, CAD/CAM, inspection and quality control, engineering design technology and maintenance machining.



The Boeing Engineering Technician Apprenticeship (BETA) program mirrors Ranken's successful integrated work-based internship model in place within the college's Automotive, Manufacturing, and Diesel technology programs and is similar to the College's Spire Cooperative Education Partnership for HVAC students who obtain jobs with the natural gas company after earning their associate degree.

the company pledged \$100 million to fund programs such as apprenticeships, internships, and on-the-job workforce training and development. Boeing currently offers other technical apprenticeships, but this is the first partnership with Ranken. It also offers paid, hands-on manufacturing internship programs to high school students in some locations to start the workforce pipeline even earlier.

"With the likely success of this partnership with Boeing, we hope we can expand these educational opportunities with other large companies that have both engineering teams and production teams working together," says Brueggemann. "Just like Boeing, we are committed to innovative workforce development to meet the skilled workforce needs across the country." **R**

Ranken IT Graduate Heads Multimillion Dollar Tech Company



Coder & founder Robert Hamm talks with team member Sam Mitchell while checking out the latest production of embroidered hats at HatLaunch in Collinsville, Ill.

With a two-year degree from Ranken, a gift for problem-solving, and a highly entrepreneurial spirit, Robert Hamm has burst onto the Illinois business start-up scene with his Collinsville-based company called HatLaunch.

HatLaunch couples sophisticated software technology with a robust e-commerce platform and an array of computerized industrial embroidery machines to produce and sell high-quality, custom-embroidered hats. The company began with an initial website and no company-owned equipment. "I sold 100 hats the first day and asked a friend's mother to embroider them for me," laughs Hamm. "I've taken this business from my basement to my garage and then to our current location. We keep surpassing projections to the point that I'll be moving to a 40,000 square-foot facility down the road later this year."

Now in its fifth year, HatLaunch is topping half a million hats embroidered and sold and is projected to post \$10 million in annual revenue by the end of 2023. The company operates its own large industrial

embroidery machines and has 35 employees. Among them is recent Ranken IT graduate Amel Topalovic, hired this past May as a software developer.



Paying it forward: 2023 Ranken IT graduate Amel Topalovic (left) is the newest employee at Robert Hamm's HatLaunch.

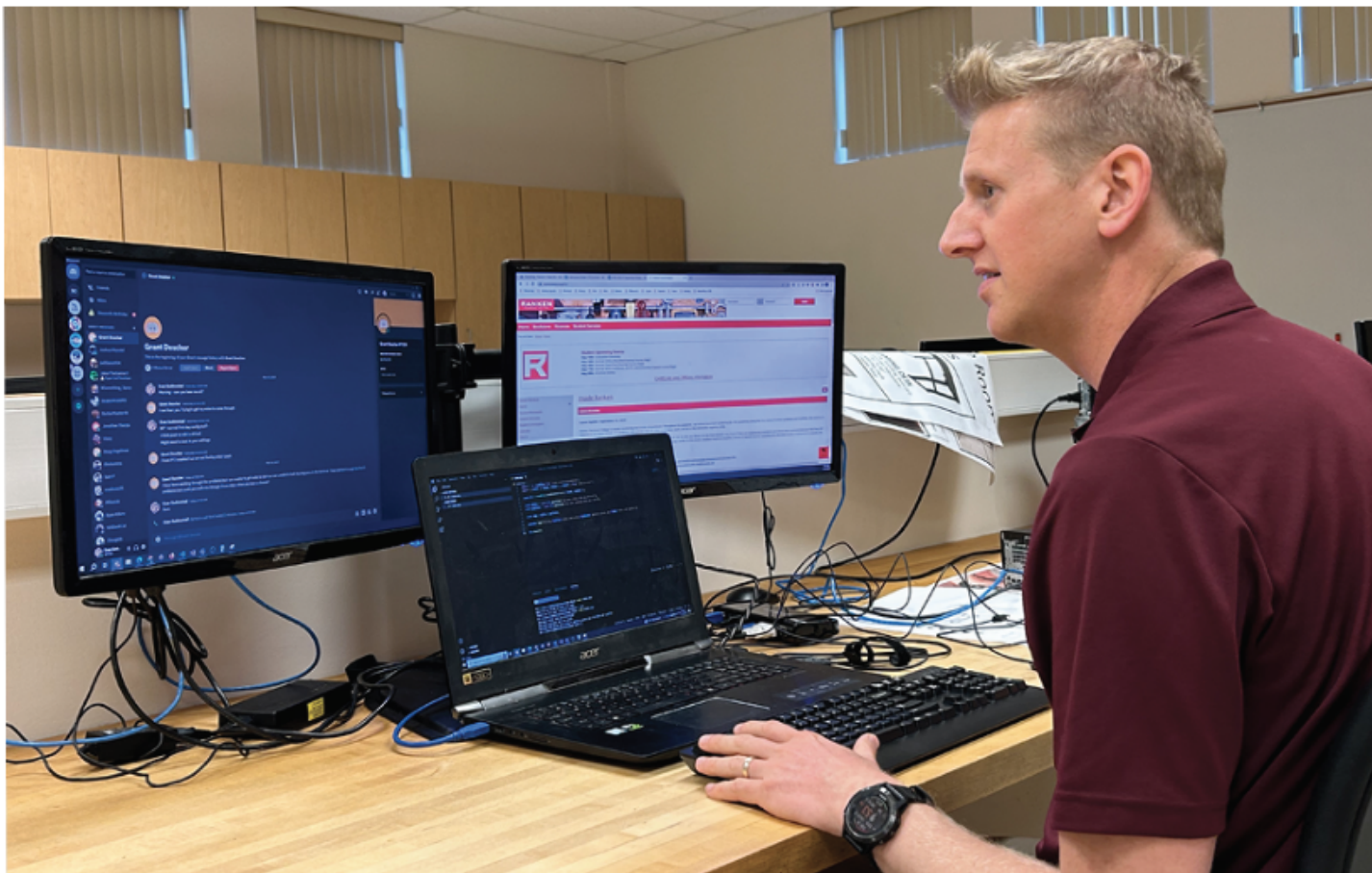
"Ranken taught me to have a strong work ethic, but the IT program, in particular, taught me to think outside of the box, creatively troubleshoot problems, and write code in multiple languages," says Hamm.

He has been an IT guru since he was in high school, where he excelled in a web design class. He soon began marketing his expanding skills on Craigslist, making websites, digital graphics, and e-commerce platforms for small businesses. He enrolled at Ranken after listening to a classroom presentation by Evan Gudmestad, now the college's department chair of IT. Hamm completed his degree requirements early, and before he officially graduated, accepted a full-time job at Northrop Grumman, working on the Centralized Air Mobility Planning System (CAMPS) for the U.S. Air Force. Over the next several years, he moved from government contractors to private companies, re-writing code and improving automated processes. "Every time I jumped to a new job, I was in a completely different environment with different IT languages," he says. "I always learned new things and my salary kept growing."

The salary enabled him to pursue a hobby – cars. He joined several car clubs and made a t-shirt design for one group that resulted in more than \$2,500 in sales almost immediately. "I was just thinking; car people love hats, I want a good quality hat," Hamm recalls. "I couldn't find a good website, so I made one and HatLaunch grew out of that."

As HatLaunch took off, Hamm quit a well-paid position as a software engineer at Express Scripts to run his own business full time. Last year, he purchased a screen-printing business to automate design, printing, and purchase of custom apparel. Called ShirtLaunch, it's already picking up steam – and sales. "In everything I've done, I ask myself how I can eliminate friction and automate processes," he says. "You know, in Ranken's IT program, I learned something every day. That kind of environment pushes you to solve technical problems continuously and independently. It was that, coupled with the work ethic requirement, that gave me a great foundation from which to succeed." **R**

IT Application & Web Development Technology



Evan Gudmestad, chair of Ranken's Information Technology Division, helps remotely on a class assignment with a student in the IT Application and Web Development program. IT programs can either be taken online or in person.

Want to know which jobs are in high demand over the next decade? Look no farther than U.S. News & World Report's annual ranking of "Best Jobs," which lists software developer as the #1 job position in its 2023 listings.

"Software developers are becoming increasingly critical for the growth and sustained success of businesses across industries," notes Janica Ingram, U.S. News' careers editor.

It's not a passing fad. Demand for software developers is expected to grow at an above-average rate over the next 10 years. Annual salaries are high, often starting at \$65,000 and then trending into the six figures for experienced, talented developers.

"When you think of Facebook, Instagram, Spotify, or even Amazon, software developers are at the front and back end of how these sites connect with their users, explains Evan Gudmestad, chair of Ranken's Information Technology Division and instructor of the College's IT Application and Web Development Technology program.

The key is how an application or website communicates and interacts with its users. Software developers create interactive websites, IT applications that support e-commerce, and write code that enables you to search for a specific artist on Spotify or pay bills online or by phone.

At Ranken, the IT Application and Web Development program is a two-year, hands-

on intensive curriculum that can be completed in person or entirely online. The program boasts a high job placement rate for its graduates who work in a wide range of companies holding diverse job titles such as software engineer, web developer, web analyst, mobile app developer and full stack developer or engineer.

"Students learn to build websites and then are immersed in software development," says Gudmestad. "Then they tie those things together for web application development."

Two software technology stacks are part of the curriculum – Javascript and Microsoft .NET. But by the time students graduate with their associate degree, 10+ languages can be learned. "What sets us apart is that within our two-year program, our students are working hands on for four hours a day, five days a week writing code," says Gudmestad. "That's 20 hours a week of development over four semesters, which is more than most other educational institutions."

Two years ago, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Ranken added the online degree component, enabling students to train remotely. During the day, instructors are available for synchronous learning – in the classroom and online simultaneously – and remote students message instructors directly with questions. Educators also link and share screens to discuss skills training and talk through various lessons and problems. Course videos are available online at any time

to all students which also has broadened access to obtain a degree.

Gudmestad, who loves to educate as many people as possible on software development, has a popular YouTube channel that he started in 2011. It now has more than 1600 subscribers, with almost 5,000 views in just the last month. Among his most popular videos is a Javascript tutorial that has been viewed thousands of times since it was first posted in 2012. He has many fans, many who leave comments such as these: "10 years later, this video is still useful to me; thanks for uploading this and helping people like me." "Amazing! Finally, someone explains it simply." "Dude, you're genuine. You have no idea how easy you made this for me. Thank you so much."

Also posted to YouTube by Gudmestad are IT alumni interviews, which he says not only are interesting to see career pathways but also serve as a potential draw for the next generation of IT students at Ranken.



Graduates of Ranken's IT programs are in high demand at the College's biannual job fairs.

"We work hard to have a dynamic curriculum that is guided by our industry advisory boards so that our students are prepared to jump into well-paying careers," he says. "By the time anyone graduates, they have a full portfolio to share with potential employers. If I can show an employer what our students can do, that's typically all it takes. Our students are well-trained and in high demand." **R**

Student Scholarships

An Important Piece of the Financial Aid Puzzle



Neil Rowden, a second-year HVAC student, addresses attendees at Ranken's annual Scholarship Luncheon.

August is a busy time for Ranken Admissions and Financial Aid staff as they help students enroll and work through the gauntlet that is the modern student financial aid system. For the vast majority of Ranken students, paying for their education is a puzzle comprised of federal Pell grants, federal student loans, scholarships, institutional financial assistance, and personal loans. For most of our students, there are many pieces to their financial aid puzzle; the challenge becomes even greater when there are a couple of pieces missing.

The process begins with students completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form that determines the amount of support a student needs to attend college. Based on the FAFSA, students may qualify for a Pell Grant and federally supported student loans. If a student qualifies for the maximum Pell grant and federal loan, they will receive up to \$12,895 towards the cost for one academic year. For a Carpentry student, this would leave a gap of nearly \$5,000 for the student to cover from personal and family income or a personal loan. For students in programs such as Automotive or Architecture, the gap can be as much as \$16,000! Unfortunately, this gap in funding prevents hundreds of potential students from attending Ranken each year.

Ranken is working to make a quality technical education affordable and accessi-

ble by offering institutional aid, endowed and annual scholarships funded by alumni, businesses, and other donors. This academic year, the College will provide more than \$2.8

million in support to students. This includes \$275,000 from 26 endowed scholarship funds, and more than \$693,000 in annual scholarship awards with the rest coming from fundraising and general revenue.

For Ranken student Neil Rowden, his financial aid puzzle included a Pell grant and federal student loans. Even with Neil receiving the maximum amount of support, his gap as a HVAC student was approximately \$4,250. Without additional scholarship support from Ranken, Neil could not afford to attend even though he is working two jobs. But Neil knows the effort he is putting in at school and his jobs will pay off with a rewarding career. Neil said, "I am immensely grateful for the support of the donors and the opportunity to attend Ranken."

Making a Ranken education more accessible to students is a goal for Ranken President, Don Pohl who says, "Ranken provides the best technical education in the region and with locations across the state, we are physically accessible to more students. But with more than 80% of students needing financial assistance, we are asking donors to invest in our students because we know scholarships will provide a lifetime return on the investment in a Ranken graduate." **R**



Summer Jaggli, a third-year Architecture student, with Ms. Angela Coleman who sponsors the annual BJ Cothran Scholarship.

THANKS TO **YOU!**

Nu Way - Rhomberg Scholarship

From Gag Gifts to Scholarships!

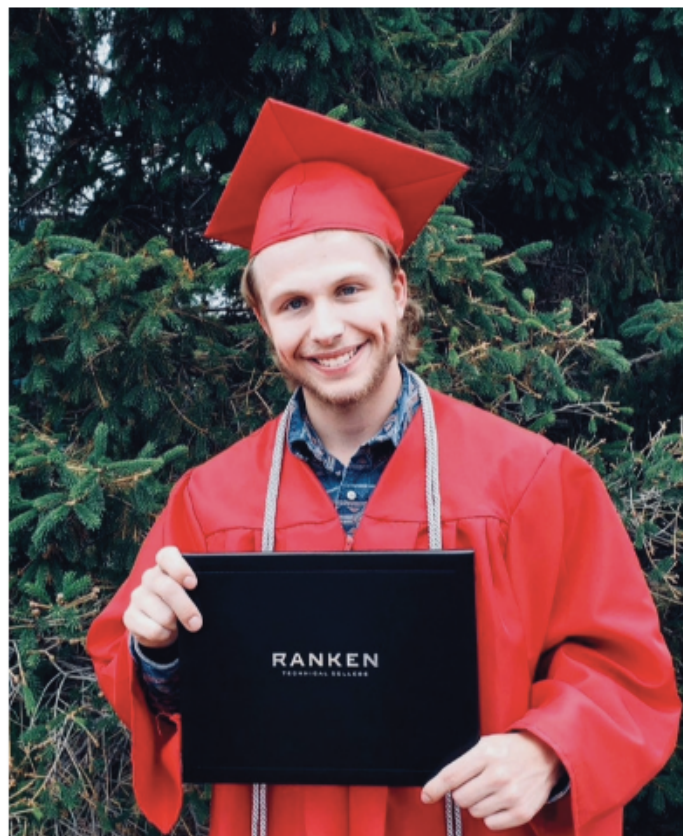


Nu Way employees (left to right): Pat Shocklee, Melody Brenneisen, Aaron Rhomberg, Kurt Jenick, Joe Wibbenmeyer, Jeff Rhomberg, Kevin Lee, and Matt Clements.

As a family-run business, Nu Way employees have always maintained a close relationship with the company's owners, who work side by side with team members. Nu Way, a third-generation family business that began in 1955, provides innovative applications for concrete forms in construction. Today, Nu Way has grown to five locations in the St. Louis region that provide "everything for the contractor," from product and equipment sales and rentals to rebar fabrication and support.

The "family" culture carried over to company holiday parties where employees joined together to purchase fun gifts for the two founding partners, Adolph and Arthur Rhomberg. After a few years of receiving gifts from team members, however, it became evident that while the Rhomberg's appreciated the gifts, they didn't really need them. That led to the idea for employees to pool their funds to support a charity. But which charity should they support? With the suggestion of Joe Wibbenmeyer, Nu Way's General Manager and a 1986 graduate of Ranken, they decided to establish and support a college scholarship to help a student in the Construction program. Since 1999, the Nu Way-Rhomberg Scholarship has supported 30 construction students at Ranken!

Joe Wibbenmeyer first joined Nu Way when he was just 13 years old, sweeping floors and stocking merchandise as the company expanded into selling tools and



A new Ranken/Nu Way Connection! Matthew Caraway, a 2023 graduate of Ranken's Plumbing program and now an apprentice plumber for Raider Mechanical is the son of Ryan Caraway, a Nu Way team member.

equipment to customers in the construction industry. At an age when most teens were riding bikes and playing outside with friends, Joe was hard at work. The company noticed his work ethic and Joe was promoted to manage retail sales. While working at Nu Way, Joe was advised by a coworker that as a "family" business, his prospects for advancement were limited. After graduating from Ranken's Precision Machining Technology program, Joe left Nu Way and accepted a position at Nooter Corporation.

Having worked at Nooter for a while, Joe realized that he missed Nu Way, and after speaking to a member of the Rhomberg family, Joe was encouraged to come back as there were opportunities for him to advance in the company. Even though Joe wasn't doing machining work, he still credits his Ranken education as he says he "uses what he learned at Ranken every day."

Joe's connection and dedication to personally support the scholarship has grown with the level of the award, growing from a single \$1,200 scholarship to supporting two, \$2,500 scholarships for the 2023/2024 school year. Joe's rationale for supporting the scholarship is based on two factors; his appreciation to the Rhomberg family and Nu Way for the opportunities he has had over the past 45 years, and his belief that Ranken produces students who are "a better product" and because of their skills, companies employing Ranken graduates also make a better product, helping companies make greater profits.

Joe also supports Ranken by promoting the College to members of the Nu Way team. In fact, this May, Matthew Caraway whose father Ryan is a member of the Nu Way team graduated from Ranken's plumbing program and was hired right out of school as an Apprentice Plumber for Raider Mechanical.

When asked about their scholarship, Joe says, "Supporting a student in need makes a real difference and it makes us feel good to be a part of their future success." **R**

RANKEN

TECHNICAL COLLEGE

4431 FINNEY AVENUE | SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI 63113
(314) 371-0236 | RANKEN.EDU

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
ST. LOUIS MO
PERMIT NO 2147



RANKEN
TECHNICAL COLLEGE

We Appreciate Your Support!

Please consider making a gift to Ranken Technical College. Your support can help provide:

- scholarship funds for students
- support for your favorite program
- funds for areas of greatest need

You may make a check out to Ranken Technical College and put your designation in the memo.

Mail to:
Ranken Technical College
Development Office
4431 Finney Ave
St. Louis, MO 63113

OR – scan this QR code to go directly to our online donation page.

If you are interested in including Ranken Technical College in your estate planning, please contact Brien McCarthy at 314-286-3602 or bpmccarthy@ranken.edu and ask about the David Ranken, Jr. Legacy Society.

