

Danville Area Community College Initiates One-Year Certificate Program For Golf Course Mechanics



Ask a superintendent, “Who is your most valuable employee?” and he or she might very well answer, “My mechanic.” Most of us have been assistants at one time or another, but are a little further removed from the days of grinding reels and adjusting carburetors. If we can help it, very few of us want to get back under a mower and if you don’t have a qualified equipment technician running the shop, the task of maintaining a high-quality facility is nearly impossible. Additionally, there is a well-documented shortage of qualified technicians available (supported by the routine allegations of “mechanic stealing”). However, the tide could be turning due in part to a new training program at downstate Danville Area Community College (DACC).

... this program is going to graduate some excellent technicians and help raise the professional bar of the industry.

The one-year certificate program will graduate its second crop this summer. In an ongoing effort to market the program and as an alumni of beloved DACC, I would like to let you know a bit more about the program. Perhaps you have an employee who could use the formal training or you yourself regularly speak at career days. There so seems to be a general lack of career awareness, so please keep the DACC program in mind if you ever get the chance to talk to high school students!

DACC, of course, has a well-established golf course management program. In fact, the faculty was encouraged to start this new training program at the beckoning of superintendents, many alumni of DACC. These same superintendents assisted the faculty in shaping the program—a real plus. Larry Korte, an instructor at DACC since 1971, teaches the majority of the courses. Mr. Korte has an extensive farming background and has taught auto mechanic, electrical and computer-related classes over the years. The one-year certificate program includes classroom work from August-March and concludes with an internship in April-July.

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Regarding the curriculum, it features 33 credit hours of classroom work; a full plate for any student in one year. Specifically, it breaks out like this:

FALL SEMESTER

- Preventative Maintenance & Safety
- Small Gas & Diesel Engines
- Turf Electrical Applications
- Reel Grinding & Adjustment
- Business Computer Systems
- Turfgrass Culture

SPRING SEMESTER

- Golf Cart Maintenance
- Turf Hydraulic Applications
- Turf Equipment Analysis
- Turf Spray Equipment
- Gas/Electric Welding
- Turf Equipment Internship

As you can see, all students are required to take a turfgrass class, a real must and a critical learning area that many technicians fail to grasp. Mr. Korte and current turfgrass instructor Chuck Schroeder are available to answer any questions that you



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might have about the program. They can be reached at 217-443-8573, are always on hand at the NCTE and have been at the international GCSAA conference for the past several years as well. They've done a great job launching this program and industry veterans like Mark Johnson helped secure a great deal of used equipment for the students to work on.

In closing, I'm sure this program is going to graduate some excellent technicians and help raise the professional bar of the industry. Danville offers a unique hands-on experience, small classes and fully-equipped labs. I believe the internship is critical; the graduates will have classroom training **and** experience. What they could really use now are a few more students!



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