

Jacobsen announces degree for turf equipment technicians

Jacobsen Textron will sponsor the turf industry's first two-year associate degree program for turf equipment technicians. The program will be offered at Texas State Technical College in Waco. Jacobsen has also established two annual scholarships for students participating in the program.

Developed jointly by Jacobsen's training staff and the college, the technicians' program combines a curriculum focused on a solid understanding of hydraulics, electrical and engine principles, along with hands-on training.

"Jacobsen chose Texas State Technical College because of its strong mechanics' program and an active advisory committee for its golf course and turfgrass management studies," said Tony Saiia, Jacobsen vice president of customer service & product support. "The school has excellent training labs, as well as several holes of golf which provide perfect 'real life' areas for learning about turf equipment."

Saiia added that program developers agreed that technicians and mechanics should have a clear understanding of the day-to-day demands of turfgrass maintenance, in addition to their technical equipment training.

"Our intention," said Wallace "Tinker" Clift, CGCS, who heads the Golf Course & Turfgrass Management program at the college, "is to meet the demands that the golf and grounds maintenance industry has placed upon us in recent years. We want these students to receive both technical training in the classroom and field experience in an approved work situation before they graduate."

Jacobsen has also established two annual scholarships to provide additional support for the program – the Wayne Snell Memorial Scholarship and the Steve Moffett Memorial Scholarship. They are named in memory of two turf professionals who were associated with Jacobsen



A combination of classroom and hands-on training will stress hydraulics, electrical systems, engine principles and more.

Lake City CC GCO program

Florida's Lake City Community College's also has an Equipment Technician program. In fact, the one-year program annually graduates about 25 technicians, who have more than 100 job offers waiting for them. John Piersol, chairman of the LCCC program, said he receives calls each year from as far away as Louisiana, Tennessee, Texas and North Dakota from courses looking for trained technicians.

Piersol said he is happy to see the new program at Texas State Technical College and the development of the EETC's efforts to help organize a national effort in preparing qualified people for a rewarding career in golf course maintenance.

"As an industry we are definitely lacking in providing well-rounded technician training for the mechanics who must manage shops and repair today's sophisticated equipment," he said.

"Part of the problem is that educational institutions don't really understand the golf industry. It takes a lot of capital up front to outfit a proper teaching facility.

"Having the proper person head up the program is the final piece of the puzzle. He must be a very pro-active person with good organizational and managerial skills as well as the mechanical background."

Piersol knows that it will take a combined effort from all sectors of the industry to make some sort of standardized and officially recognized technician training a reality. He has suggested that maybe the GCSAA might act as an impartial facilitator for such an effort.

"We need to form partnerships with industry to develop a standardized curriculum that trains an individual for the total needs of a golf course shop operation from administration to welding," he said.

"We need to approach schools and help start the programs. In return it would only be fair that the golf industry should have a large say in who runs the program. We can't have the old high school shop teacher or votech auto mechanics/small engine repair teacher do it!"

Just as the superintendent's role has grown beyond "greenskeeping" over the years, so has the mechanic's role in running the shop. It's time to devote a little more thought to how these new equipment technicians and shop managers are to be trained for the future... and to support the process.