

Need for Golf Course Mechanics Technology Program Identified in 1971, Met in 1973

(Original Program Announcement of 1973)

Golf Course Mechanics Technology is a new one-year credit-hour program to be offered in Golf and Landscape Operations Department, scheduled to begin fall 1973. It will be a unique program in the turf industry in the United States.

The need for this specialized program has been projected by the State Department of Education Advisory Committee for the Turf Industry since 1971 in their State Manpower Profile Study. They suggest it be located at this college because of the logical tie-in with the existing program in Golf Course Operations, now a proven program known nationally.

Based on the above endorsement, the recommendations of an Advisory Committee for Golf Course Mechanics and further personal contacts with the golf course industry in Florida, the Southeast and the nation, need for this specialized curriculum more that justifies its earliest possible commencement.

OBJECTIVE OF NEW PROGRAM

The objective of this program is to train golf course mechanics whose duties combine mechanics technology, shop management and in some cases supervisory responsibilities. In the golf course table of organization the mechanic is directly responsible to the golf course superintendent (who is trained in our Golf Course Operations program).

PROGRAM JUSTIFICATION

In Florida alone it has been estimated by leaders in the golf course equipment industry that sales and service of golf course equipment exceed \$10 million annually. This is increasing rapidly with the expanding number of golf courses (increased from 125 in 1953 to over 500 in 1973).

As the volume of golf course equipment increases, so does its complexity and sophistication. Not only does the volume of equipment sales increase due to the expanding number of golf courses, but also due to the increasing expenditure per course. The high costs and shortage of labor has forced increased mechanization and today the equipment inventory on a modern 18-hole golf course facility may vary between \$75,000 and \$100,000. Many of the golf courses in Florida and the Southeast are multi-course complexes in which the value of the equipment would be much higher.

In order to maintain this increasing volume and complexity of equipment requires a mechanically oriented specialist who is familiar with golf course

operations and the specialized type of equipment used thereon. Thus, he must be trained differently from the typical automotive mechanic. To my knowledge there is no such training program anywhere in the United States. Therefore, in exploratory discussions, both the golf course superintendents and the equipment industry (manufacturers, distributors, and service specialists) have enthusiastically encouraged the development of this new program in Golf Course Mechanics Technology as an adjunct to our school of Golf Course Operations.

In addition to golf courses, graduates of the proposed curriculum will be in demand by the commercial elements of the industry (dealer and distributor sales and service) and will be better trained than any other available manpower for other facilities in the environmental industry who use much of the same types of equipment including landscape construction and maintenance firms, parks, sod farms, etc.

A further need for this training program is increased by the impact of OSHA (the Federal Occupation Safety and Health Act) regulations which are demanding modernization of all shop facilities in the golf course and landscape industries. In many cases this calls for a better trained mechanic than currently employed and currently available.

It is estimated by industry leaders that once the program is established, the market for this highly specialized technician will easily absorb 25-30 graduates per year. They further estimate that starting and benefit salary ranges for successful graduates will be between \$7,500 and \$8,500 per year with an increased earnings potential of \$10,000 to \$12,000.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Anticipating the development of this new program, an industry task force was selected in 1972 by the State Advisory Committee to explore the job requirements for modern golf course mechanic and shop operations. From this a list of job skills was developed as the starting point for curriculum development. A preliminary curriculum was presented to the State Advisory Committee and after review was endorsed in principal with recommendations that the new program be developed through proper channels at Lake City Community College.

In March, President (Herbert) Phillips appointed an official Advisory Committee for the proposed program in Golf Course Mechanics Technology, comprised of the original task force plus additional leaders in the golf course equipment industry throughout the Southeast. The first meeting of this committee was held March 23, 1973.