

4 dealerships offer chance at jobs while students pursue BC3's auto tech program

Opportunity allows participants “to get their foot in the door before graduation,” recruiter says

July 12, 2017

(Butler, PA) Students who enroll in Butler County Community College's auto technician certificate program now have the opportunity to work at one of four nearby new-car stores while pursuing the nine-month course and upon graduation, find a job that eventually pays \$30 per hour or more, a dealership administrator said.

Job demand for those skilled in the advanced technology found in today's vehicles is high, said Cathy Glasgow, president of Butler County Ford, which with Baglier Buick GMC, No. 1 Cochran Subaru and Diehl Automotive will provide students a chance to learn how to change oil filters, and rotate and balance tires, while earning roughly \$9 per hour as they pursue the auto technician certificate, Glasgow said.

“Programs like BC3's allow students to get their foot in the door before graduation,” said Courtney Halle, a recruiter with No. 1 Cochran Subaru, “and that is always a good thing.”

Added Kelly (Jordan) McKissick, BC3's coordinator of professional education and certificate programs: “The uniqueness of this certificate is the earn and learn opportunity involving the participating dealerships.”

Full-time, fully certified auto technicians can ultimately earn a flat rate of \$30 per hour, Glasgow said, and, according to Dennis Baglier, owner of Baglier Buick GMC, the “potential for more than \$100,000 for a master technician.”

“These jobs provide long-term, career-sustaining job opportunities with excellent pay and without the debt of a four-year college degree,” said Kathleen Amati, director of automotive careers with the Greater Pittsburgh Automobile Dealers Association, which will provide a 263-piece, \$325 toolkit free to students for use in the program and for employment.

“Dealerships are finding it hard to find qualified people,” instructor says

Classes will be held from 5:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. Mondays through Wednesdays, from Sept. 11 through May, at the Butler County Area Vocational-Technical School, 210 Campus Lane, Butler.

Funding may be available for the \$9,999 course through CareerLink and CareerTrack for eligible students, McKissick said. A student loan available for professional certification programs can be pursued through SallieMae.

Participants must possess a high school diploma or its equivalency. Program requirements include a \$75 fee for vocational screening assessment, to be held from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Aug. 21, and an employability skills class from 4:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Aug. 28-31. Both will be held on BC3's main campus. Students must also successfully complete a drug screening and certified background check.

Graduates will earn certification for entry-level maintenance and repair for vehicles, for inspections and for emissions testing.

"Dealerships are finding it hard to find qualified people," said program instructor Byron Dreher, an Automotive Service Excellence certified master in engine repair, engine management, automatic transmissions, manual drivetrain and clutches, suspension and steering, brakes, HVAC and electronic and electrical systems.

"There are more people leaving automotive repair industry positions due to retirement or other interests than can be filled with qualified people. The job market for qualified to basic technicians is growing by the day."

Association rep expects many grads to find jobs in new-car stores

Amati, whose Greater Pittsburgh Automotive Dealers Association represents 150 new-car stores in an 11-county area, said the regional shortage of entry-level technicians is growing "year by year."

"Many technicians now in the field are nearing retirement age," Amati said. "You can expect many of the graduates of this program to find employment in a new-car store. Good relationships with the Greater Pittsburgh Automotive Dealers Association new-car stores will be developed during the course of the BC3 auto tech program."

Safety and general maintenance, steering and suspension, brakes, manual drivetrains and axles, engine repair, electrical and electronic systems, engine performance and HVAC are among topics to be addressed in the course.

"The students might be surprised by the many diagnostic tools that are available to help diagnose the systems that are found in today's vehicles," Dreher said. "They may also find that the old tricks from yesteryear will not work on the vehicles today."

"There is a lot more wiring in today's vehicles that can cause problems. Today's vehicles are considered a computer network on wheels."

The cost includes class materials and one attempt at Automotive Service Excellence maintenance and light repair (G1) certification, and inspections and emissions certifications.

BC3 administrator: Program reflects need for training

“All of our certificate programs have evolved from a need in our community for training for employment,” said Lisa Campbell, BC3’s interim director of workforce development. “In the development of our certificate programs, we learn about employment needs from employers, other resource partners, sitting on committees and advisory boards, and do a careful assessment of our own to determine whether we can develop a program that will help their industry and create pathways to employment for our participants.”

The certificate is also stackable into BC3’s 30-credit technical trades-applied technology certificate.

“Candidates who are willing to invest in themselves through training – whether through college or trade school – are already showing their dedication to building their futures and careers,” Halle said. “BC3’s commitment to helping students achieve this dream is a wonderful investment in their surrounding communities.”

Free tool kit: 150 sockets and other items

The Craftsman mechanics tool set provided free by the Greater Pittsburgh Automobile Dealers Association features metric, standard, inch and deep-well sockets made for three ratchet sizes, Amati said. It includes 150 sockets, a spark plug socket, 10-inch ignition wrenches, a magnetic holder, a 30-bit screwdriver set, 12 nut-driver bits, 40 hex keys, three quick-release ratchets, four extension bars and 12 ratcheting wrenches.

Graduates of BC3’s program can possibly find a permanent position at their dealerships, Baglier and Glasgow said.

“We count on it,” Baglier said.

For more information, visit bc3.edu/autotech, or contact Kelly (Jordan) McKissick at 724-287-8711, Ext. 8171 or email Kelly.Jordan@bc3.edu.

Information on loans for professional certification programs can be obtained at SallieMae.com/SmartDecision.