



## THE SKILLS DIVIDE — ARE APPRENTICESHIPS A BRIDGE TOO FAR?

While sitting at home thinking of ways to spread the news regarding the value of apprenticeships, this writer decided to start watching the 39th season of “This Old House” (TOH). Known for featuring excellent tradesmen and craftsmen, the TOH project this season is restoring a middle-class home on a tight “reasonable” budget. TOH has teamed with Mike Rowe, host of “Dirty Jobs” and founder of the Mike Rowe Works Foundation, to spotlight the value of interns and apprentices. The Rowe Works Foundation is a 5011(3) public charity that rewards people with a passion to get trained for skilled jobs that actually exist. All trades participating in the project will use interns or apprentices. The TOH team is shining a light on the shortage of people entering the trades and the necessity of the work-based training model to fill vacant positions or replace experienced retiring employees.

Like homebuilding, the manufacturing industry has countless current openings and highly experienced employees preparing to retire with years of knowledge and experience.

Throughout U.S. history, manufacturers were able to hire employees and remain at or above capacity. Traditional hiring methods, like job ads, walk-ins and word of mouth, were once adequate to the hiring task. In today’s world, these same methods produce lackluster results. Technology, trade and tax policy, training trends and years of educational choices have reduced the once-resilient employee pool to a shadow of its former self.

There is a shortage of

individuals with the understanding, knowledge and interest entering technical training at a time when global demand has increased. The pace and complexity of today’s industry requires educated, highly trained employees who can think and process complicated information.

Some industry execs are slow to recognize the value of the apprenticeship training model and are concerned with cost. Educators lament that students are concerned about the length of time it takes to complete apprenticeships. Locally, we have yet to reach critical mass regarding apprenticeships. A bit of clarity could move the needle!

Studies are all over the map in terms of hiring and employee replacement cost. Productivity and profit loss associated with unfilled jobs is astronomical. On average, it appears that the total costs of hiring a new employee are at least half the annual salary of a position. Most experts agree that no matter what cost rubric is examined, the cost to business is substantial.

Undoubtedly there are supervisory, benefits and potential educational costs associated with the apprenticeship model. These are the same with regular hires. Turnover and advertising cost are reduced, thereby reducing bottom line revenue impact. Training is tailored to the current and future needs of the employer thus maximizing return on investment.

National statistics support

the assertion that apprentices are more reliable and return investment quickly. Time to completion associated with an apprenticeship varies based upon the training and job classification. Parents, mentors, educators and industry leaders must continually remind young adults that training takes time and is lifelong. All high school graduates will engage in some form of post high school “training” spanning years. Traditional college frequently takes

*See page 5, “Apprenticeships”*



## WORK-BASED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

As part of VGCC's ongoing efforts to energize the local economy by providing qualified ready for work graduates, our Applied Technology programs are partnering with local industry to provide students with opportunities to gain valuable work experiences. Work-Based Learning (WBL) is the first step of our pipeline to meet the skilled employment needs of our local industry partners. WBL is a time-honored method of providing real-life work experiences, where students apply academic and technical skills while developing employability skills. By partnering with us to host a WBL opportunity, companies can gain a measure of control over the employee development process and in a way that is tailored to company needs.

### BENEFITS FOR EMPLOYERS

There are many benefits to partnering with VGCC to provide Work-Based Learning and Internship opportunities, such as:

- Providing an excellent source of temporary and potential permanent employees.
- Creating closer ties between the business world and the education community.
- Gaining a pool of skilled and motivated potential future employees
- Reducing training and recruitment costs
- Offering an opportunity to pre-train employees in company policies and practices.
- Facilitating recruitment and training through regularly available skilled and semi-skilled students.

Advanced Manufacturing & Information Technology are two fields where Work-Based Learning opportunities are critical to a student's professional success and performance. We are seeking more partners to become WBL hosts for our students. Our areas of need include: Information Technology, Welding and Mechatronics Engineering.



### MISCONCEPTION

*"Our company doesn't have time to commit to teaching students and having students shadow."*

### FACT

Students must complete a semester/year of instructional and lab work before they can consider WBL. By doing this, we ensure that students have a foundational knowledge and skill set that can be applied on the job for any entry-level or routine tasks.

*"We don't have enough full-time work for students."*

WBL requires students to work a minimum of 12 hours a week. In most instances, students do not need to be full-time to complete their learning opportunity with an employer. WBL students can be used to complete routine tasks to assist regular employees.

*"We are unable to pay students for their work."*

Some WBL opportunities are unpaid. Students earn academic credit for their work experience, just as they would in any other course.

*"Are students capable of completing tasks?"*

Students have a foundational knowledge prior to beginning a WBL opportunity. In addition, students have an assigned instructor to ensure that they are completing the tasks they are given. At the end of the experience, students are given a performance grade by the employer and their instructor, based on their performance.

*"WBL seems to be too short-term of a commitment."*

WBL opportunities range from 8 to 16 weeks each semester. Employers have the option to continue having a student work with them for additional semesters. WBL can be a great trial period for employers and students. Some students have moved from WBL to an internship to full-time employment with a partner.

**Thank You!** to our current WBL partners: Ardagh Glass, Axis Corrugated Container, BFS Industries, CertainTeed, MGM Products, and Mild to Wild Customs & Race Cars. To become a Work-Based Learning partner and for more information about WBL, please contact Cherrelle Lawrence - job placement coordinator at [lawrencec@vgcc.edu](mailto:lawrencec@vgcc.edu) or (252) 738-3386.

## FRIGI-TEMP PARTNERS WITH VGCC ON APPRENTICESHIP

Youngsville-based Frigi-Temp has partnered with Vance-Granville Community College on an apprenticeship initiative. Frigi-Temp is a commercial HVAC and refrigeration service provider and licensed mechanical contractor that has been serving central North Carolina since 2001.

Company CEO Cory Thornton said that he sought to partner with the college to help recruit new technicians to keep up with demand. "Over the next few years, it's estimated that there will be a shortage of 50,000 HVAC technicians nationwide, because the number of new people going into the industry isn't enough to keep pace with all those who are retiring," Thornton explained. "Demand is growing significantly, and it's fair to say that since the greater Raleigh area is one of the best places to raise a family and has relatively high economic growth, there should be more demand here than in other areas. So that's a problem, but also a great opportunity for people to go into a field that will pay well. Good technicians can make \$70,000-80,000 a year."

He added that the apprenticeship model involves a combination of on-the-job training at his company with formal education in the VGCC Air Conditioning, Heating, and Refrigeration Technology program. "This gives you a straight path to a career with little to no educational debt," Thornton said. "After approximately four years in this program, apprentices will have been employed the whole time while earning their education." Frigi-Temp



From left, Ken Wilson, project manager for the TechHire grant, shakes hands with Cory Thornton, CEO of Frigi-Temp, a commercial HVAC and refrigeration service provider and licensed mechanical contractor. Frigi-Temp and VGCC have partnered in an apprenticeship initiative.

has trained people from other trades, but with the apprenticeship program, they will have the added benefit of the VGCC credential.

The CEO also wants to focus the partnership on recruiting military veterans. "I'm a veteran of the United States Marine Corps, and we have been intentional about hiring veterans since I joined Frigi-Temp in 2010," Thornton said. "We want to help veterans who are still transitioning out of the service to land on their feet and start a new career."

He said he would like for the first

students in the partnership to begin as early as January 2018. Thornton noted that Frigi-Temp already employs VGCC alumni. "Two of our top technicians came through VGCC," he said. "We are excited that Frigi-Temp has become our first apprenticeship partner in the HVAC field, and we look forward to working with Cory and his team," said Ken Wilson, project manager for the TechHire grant at the college and a driving force behind the VGCC "Vanguard Apprenticeship Collaborative," designed to cultivate highly skilled workers for large and small companies in a number of industries.

Wilson added that VGCC is a member of the national Registered Apprenticeship College Consortium (RACC) whose primary purpose is to help graduates of registered apprenticeship programs receive college credit for their apprenticeship training through strong partnerships between businesses and educational institutions.

REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP-  
COLLEGE CONSORTIUM

**RACC**

A network of Colleges and Registered Apprenticeship Programs  
working together to provide college-to-career opportunities

## VGCC TECHLINK SPEAKER SERIES

Many of us remember what it was like when faced with the question “what do you want to do after school” or “where do you want to work after you get your degree/training.” For most students these questions bring about the same fear and trepidation as the phrase “open wide” during a dental check-up. Many have no tangible understanding of what the future looks like.

As educators we continually examine innovative ways to expose students to learning opportunities that are relevant and mentally stimulating. In addition to Work-Based Learning (WBL) opportunities, VGCC has introduced our in-class industry TechLink Speaker Series and TechTours. These initiatives are designed to expose students to industry leaders and production operations. Anyone

looking to make an impression on the next generation of employees should join our line-up of presenters. Topics are led by the speakers and can include company overview, job opportunities, specific processes, career outlook and student questions and answers. Please contact Cherrelle Lawrence, job placement coordinator, at [lawrencec@vgcc.edu](mailto:lawrencec@vgcc.edu) or (252) 738-3386.

### TechLink Speaker Series Highlights

#### ***K-Flex USA***

K-Flex, represented by Alpesh Thaker, director of manufacturing, joined our students as the first TechLink speaker. K-FLEX USA is a leading manufacturer of elastomeric, closed cell insulation products that are easy-to-use and deliver reliable and lasting performance. Thaker discussed the culture and opportunities that await students if they are interested in joining the K-Flex team. Students engaged in the descriptions of the processes involved in product development and manufacture. In addition, Thaker highlighted the growth and expansion that K-Flex is undergoing. Several students expressed an interest in learning more about K-Flex and the WBL opportunities.

In April 2012, K-FLEX USA was awarded with ISO9001 certification by FM Approvals. The independent certification demonstrates the company’s commitment to quality and affirms that K-FLEX USA has thoroughly documented its quality processes while meeting the stringent qualifications for the global ISO 9001 standard. K-FLEX USA serves the Plumbing, HVAC/R, Commercial/Industrial, Marine, Oil & Gas, Acoustic and OEM Markets. K-FLEX USA is a member of the IK Insulation Group,



*Alpesh Thaker, director of manufacturing at K-Flex USA, met with VGCC students at the first TechLink Speaker Series.*

a world leader in elastomeric foam insulation whose distribution channel reaches 43 countries, including 11 production facilities. As a result, K-Flex USA has global access to strong fundamental research programs and state-of-the-art levels of technical knowledge and customer support.

#### ***Edwards, Inc.***

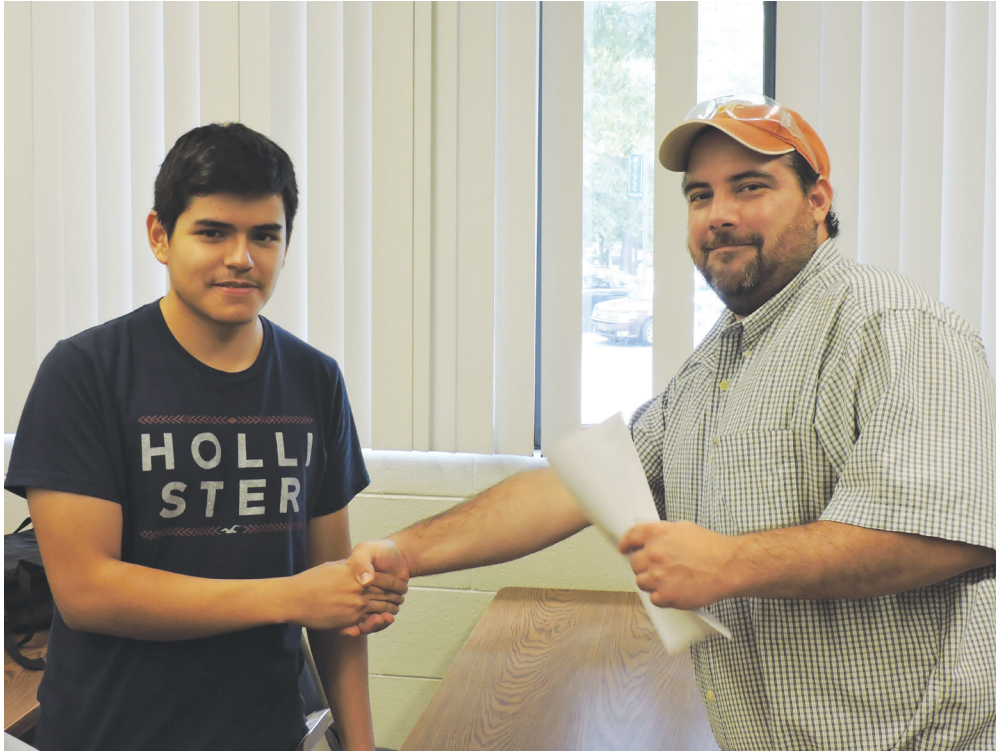
Joel Lee, engineering manager of Edwards, Inc., visited the VGCC main campus on October 18 to share information about the company. Edwards, Inc. is an industrial contractor providing full-service fabrication, crane and rigging, piping, electrical, general plant maintenance and ASME Code fabrication and repair. Edwards serves a variety of industries including: power generation, pharmaceutical, general manufacturing, food processing, wood and paper products, textiles, and agriculture. Welding and HVAC students participated in a spirited discussion on the various projects that Edwards undertakes and what it takes to start a career at the company. Students were engrossed as Lee discussed the scale of the equipment and fabrication methods used by the company. Students learned that Edwards, Inc., is a place where many of them could see themselves in the future. Students discovered that although positions and



*Joel Lee, engineering manager at Edwards, Inc., met with VGCC Welding and HVAC students during the TechLink Speaker Series.*

opportunities exist, education and lab experience is the best way to prepare themselves for work. Lee stressed the need for students to be drug free, have the ability to pass a background check, maintain an acceptable social media presence, and have the ability to learn high level skills.

## WELDING TECHNOLOGY STUDENTS EARN WELDING QUALIFICATION



*This summer, six 2nd year Welding students have passed Vance-Granville Community College's qualification tests, according to the American Welding Society (AWS) welding performance standards. Hernan Hernandez, Austin Holliday, Eduardo Ibarra-Renteria, Andrew Lynam, Daniel McIlvaine and Cedric Rodebaugh worked hard this summer to earn their D.1.1 – 2010 Structural Welding – Shielded Metal Arc Welding (SWAW) qualification which qualifies welders to work with mild steel such as carbon and low-alloy metals. Shown at left, VGCC Welding student Hernan Hernandez shakes the hand of Charles Gravel, VGCC Welding Technology instructor.*

**"TechLink" from page 4**

### Tech Tours

#### ***Newton Industries***

Students recently visited Newton Instrument Company in Butner to learn more about their products and manufacturing facility. During the tour, students were able to view Newton's operations, meet employees, watch live and robotic manufacturing processes and watch former VGCC students at work. Interested companies can host VGCC's students for a tour of their facilities.



*VGCC students visiting Newton Instrument Company in Butner.*

For more information, please contact Cherrelle Lawrence, job placement

coordinator, at [lawrencec@vgcc.edu](mailto:lawrencec@vgcc.edu) or (252) 738-3386.

#### **"Apprenticeships" from page 1**

longer than four years, produces significant debt and often difficulty finding a job. Military service, while a viable career option, involves significant training and is associated with known risks and requirements. Students engaged in "finding their path" may spend years in aimless pursuit delaying adulthood, failing to launch while living at home "saving for their own place or car".

Apprenticeship comes with a

known time to completion, no debt, and a job at the end of the journey. Over the past several years VGCC has come to understand how easy it is to establish apprenticeships. The Department of Labor and NC Commerce (Apprenticeships is now part of the NC Community College System as of July 1, 2017) have streamlined the paperwork associated with apprenticeships. Consultants are extremely helpful

and strive to facilitate set-up and operation. We encourage local industry leaders to rethink the value of taking on an apprentice. Vance-Granville Community College is committed to the apprenticeship movement and is your partner in training. Apprenticeships are the bridge to get us where we need to go.

## VGCC MANUFACTURING DAY — THURSDAY OCTOBER 5, 2017

Vance-Granville Community College held a “Manufacturing Day” celebration on Thursday, Oct. 5, in the Civic Center on the college’s Main Campus in Vance County. Nearly 200 high school students from Franklin, Granville, Vance and Warren counties attended, along with VGCC students, educators and other members of the community.

Students learned how manufacturing has changed, local career possibilities in the field and options for education and training related to careers in the industry. “Manufacturing Day is a national event meant to inspire the next generation of manufacturers and expose them to modern manufacturing trends,” said Tiffani M. Polk, an academic and career coach with the TechHire program at VGCC. “Our industry partners described the students as highly engaged and inquisitive. Together, I think we were able to reframe what manufacturing is for our future workforce.”

Participating employers included Altec of Creedmoor, Boise Cascade of Roxboro, Carolina Sunrock of Butner, Dill Air Controls of Oxford, Edwards Inc. of Spring Hope, Fastenal of Raleigh, Glen Raven of Norlina, Home Care Products of Oxford, Mars Petcare of Henderson, Novozymes of Franklinton, Plastic Ingenuity of Oxford, Revlon of Oxford, and Superior Tooling of



*Pictured from left, Joel Bailey, from Edwards, Inc., shares modern manufacturing trends with VGCC student Cedric Rodebaugh.*



*From left, Revlon representatives Bonnie Garrett and Wendy Grissom talk with area students during VGCC's Manufacturing Day celebration.*



*Pictured at left, Sandy Whitfield of Altec shares manufacturing career possibilities with local interested students.*

Wake Forest.

VGCC technical programs were represented, including Air Conditioning, Heating & Refrigeration Technology, Automotive Systems Technology, Electrical Systems Technology, Electronics Engineering Technology, Mechatronics Engineering Technology and Welding Technology. A representative from the Kerr-Tar Workforce Development Board was on hand, as well. Attendees also learned about the North Carolina Triangle Apprenticeship Program (NCTAP), which partners with colleges like VGCC and employers to prepare a skilled workforce. An alternative to the traditional four-year college degree, the program takes a student from high school through a two-year community college program like Mechatronics Engineering Technology, with the guarantee of a job at the completion of the program.

Reflecting on the event, Revlon representative Bonnie Garrett said that “it was nice to get to introduce high school students

to our company and to careers in manufacturing that they don’t often think about. We rarely get an opportunity like this.” Joel Bailey of Edwards said it was his company’s first time participating in a VGCC Manufacturing Day event. He noted that Edwards, a full-service industrial general contractor with a specialty fabrication shop, has many job openings and was particularly interested in recruiting graduates of VGCC’s Welding, Electrical Systems and HVAC programs.

The TechHire grant program at VGCC organized Manufacturing Day, with support from the Advanced Manufacturing Skills Training Alliance (AMSTA), a partnership of VGCC and local K-12 school systems. The North Carolina TechHire program supports advanced manufacturing and information technology training. VGCC is one of four partnering community colleges in the North Carolina TechHire Alliance, funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor. For more information on TechHire, contact Tiffani Polk at polkt@vgcc.edu or (252) 738-3291.

## CAREER PLANNING — PORTFOLIUM

The NC VGCC TechHire team has been examining ways to help students demonstrate their talents, capabilities and accomplishments. VGCC TechHire is providing interview coaching, résumé building and social media utilization instruction. Today's students have access to a variety of social media outlets to distinguish themselves when looking for employment opportunities. Many companies have adopted and recognize Open Badging as a method of verifying credentials. After examining many options, VGCC TechHire has decided to implement Portfolium into our career planning matrix. Portfolium is an E Portfolio tool that combines traditional tools and 21st century options and capabilities into an overall picture of an applicant by helping students



validate, organize and demonstrate capabilities and experiences. VGCC's initial roll-out will focus on students participating in the NC TechHire

grant program with access open to all VGCC students in the coming months.

## VGCC NC TECHHIRE UPDATE

Vance-Granville Community College's TechHire program will begin a new class sequence in January 2018. The federally sponsored NC TechHire grant provides support for individuals between the ages 17-29 to secure training and certifications in Information Technology and Advanced Manufacturing. For eligible participants, this is a wonderful opportunity to launch a new career at low or no cost. Certifications are offered in CompTIA, Microsoft, Cisco, Siemens and other third party programs. Several regional training entities are offering the same certifications ranging from \$2,000 to \$8,000 or more. Students are not limited in the number of courses



and certifications they may take, but they must satisfactorily complete one course prior to beginning a new course. Successful participants are offered career and job placement coaching and connected to valuable career resources. If you or someone

you know would like to participate contact Ken Wilson at (252)-738-3259 or wilsonk@vgcc.edu, Tiffani Polk at (252)-738-3291 or polkt@vgcc.edu, or Cherrelle Lawrence at (252) 738-3386 or lawrencec@vgcc.edu.

### VGCC ONLINE

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American Welding Society  
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION MEMBER

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