

Shoreline Community College
Auto Sales and Service Training Pathways Program
Shoreline, Washington

Organizational Background

In January 2005, Shoreline Community College in the Seattle area launched the General Service Technician (GST) program to train disadvantaged adults and non-traditional youth for a new set of skill standards for entry-level automotive service positions. The program, which seeks to address a critical skills shortage by increasing diversity within the automotive service industry, targets students with limited English proficiency, out-of-school youth, and incumbent and dislocated workers. Shoreline collaborates with public agencies and community-based organizations to develop strategies and services to support these students, most of whom face significant barriers to employment.

The new GST program developed out of a strong working partnership among Shoreline, the Puget Sound Automobile Dealers Association, and a group of major automobile manufacturers. The relationship between Shoreline and the dealers association began 25-plus years ago, and, prior to the creation of the GST program, had resulted in the development and the construction of the Professional Automotive Career Training (PACT) center, which opened in 1992, and the creation of a two-year Automotive Service Technician degree program. Shoreline is the regional training headquarters for General Motors, American Honda, Toyota, DaimlerChrysler and Volvo. Each company set up its own corporate certification programs at the college, attracting some of the most highly certified automotive service instructors in the country. Because students in Shoreline's Applied Associate in Arts and Sciences degree program are sponsored by dealerships, upon graduation there is a 100 percent placement rate into careers with starting salaries of approximately \$40,000.

Shoreline's newest automotive training program, the General Service Technician program, builds on the capacity of the college and the long-standing industry relationships, to offer a point of entry to family-sustaining jobs for individuals with barriers to education and employment. Challenged to develop a pipeline for the next generation of skilled workers and to serve an increasingly multicultural customer base, industry leaders recognize that Washington's automotive service sector must improve its image and attract a more diverse group of trained workers. While 45 percent of Washington businesses report difficulty in finding qualified job applicants, the number of families in the state with limited English skills has doubled since 1993, posing what Shoreline perceives as an opportunity for the industry. "Our institution was identified for this mission because we host one of the best auto service training programs in the nation, and we have excellent success in helping non-traditional students," said Matt Houghton, CST pilot project manager at Shoreline. "Most of these non-traditional students work in low-wage jobs with little or no wage progression, and are living below poverty. We aim

Distinguishing features
Drives change in the way the local industry operates:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Creates a new, more highly paid, job title based on newly created set of skills standards for entry level workers- Provides new channel of access to jobs and college courses for people with language and basic educational barriers- Includes integrated basic and technical skills curriculum
Industry
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Automotive Sales and Service; General Service Technicians; Automotive Service Technicians

to fill the auto technician shortage with people who desire wage progression, but are traditionally overlooked by the industry,” he said.

From a jobs quality perspective, the GST program is noteworthy because it responds to a critical industry skills shortage by creating a new job title for skilled entry-level employees, who through this program will receive a newly created industry-recognized skills certification and an opportunity for higher entry-level wages.

Strategy and Services

The program model serves approximately 20 students per year in a 45-credit GST Technician Certificate program. Shoreline operates two concurrent cadres of participants, each with special educational needs. Half of the participants receive Adult Basic Education (ABE) services along with the skills training, while a second group, with limited English proficiency, receives supplemental English as a Second Language (ESL) training. In addition to the automotive skills instruction and the ABE or ESL instruction, both GST classes incorporate employer-driven instruction in employability skills, including professional development, community service and leadership. For this component of the program, GST serves as a pilot for use of a new Work Readiness Credential within a sectoral initiative.¹

The program consists of 36 credit hours of training and a nine-credit paid summer internship. Because students will earn 45 college credits through the program, they may qualify for Pell grants. For the group of non-native English speakers, the training is held at night and is spread over three semesters in order to accommodate those who are working in transitional jobs to support themselves during the program.

A first group of GST students completed the program in late summer 2006. Upon completion of the program, participants receive Shoreline’s Certificate of Proficiency certifying that they have completed the 500-hour GST Training program administered by the National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation and certified by the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence. Shoreline and its partners aim to place graduates in entry-level jobs that will earn annual salaries of \$20,000-\$25,000.

Students who complete the new GST program are eligible to matriculate into more advanced level degree programs. Approximately one-third of GST graduates have gone on to enroll in the one of the five manufacturer-sponsored Automotive Service Technician associate’s degree programs at Shoreline or other manufacturer-specific programs. Should a graduate with an applied associate degree choose to go on for a four-year degree, the course will articulate to the Auto Technology Management program at Weaver State University in Utah. Shoreline is also working on developing additional articulation agreements with other universities.

¹Shoreline is in partnership with SkillsUSA as the beta site for SkillsUSA’s on-line version of its postsecondary employability skills curriculum, the Career Skills Education Program. Also, upon completion of the program, participants will be assessed for their employability skills under the National Institute for Literacy’s “Equipped for the Future” Standards.

Critical Partners

Shoreline recognizes that most of the students they have recruited into the GST program require additional supportive services in order to overcome barriers to education and employment. For this reason, the college works closely with public and private workforce development partners to develop strategies to assist disadvantaged participants during and after training, and to help those who are eligible to access public benefits. The Seattle Jobs Initiative (SJI) and TRAC Associates support the GST program by recruiting and screening applicants, assisting students to access financial aid, providing wrap-around services and providing one-year of post-placement retention support for those participants it enrolls in the program. SJI and TRAC also help connect students with resources to address needs such as child care, housing, transportation and financial management. Shoreline's own Career Education Options program for out-of-school youth provides additional case management for qualifying students. In addition, a WorkFirst/Workforce Investment Act case manager interfaces with the program to ensure that eligible trainees receive WorkFirst dollars and services.

Despite its newness, the program already has attracted attention from national partners interested in the curricula. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Washington has adopted the GST model as the automotive program for the state's secondary schools and estimates that within two years at least 40 Washington high schools will offer the GST curriculum. In addition, plans are underway for a nation-wide roll-out of the curriculum. Shoreline has now distributed its complete GST curriculum, lesson plans, student manuals, tests, etc., to the thirty-two Job Corps Centers with automotive programs and is already in partnership with the Fort Simcoe Job Corps Center in White Swan, Wash., to offer the complete GST automotive training program.

Relationship with Business

Shoreline maintains close ties with the automotive industry through its relationship with the Puget Sound Automobile Dealers Association, which is headquartered at the college, and through formal partnerships with the major automobile manufacturers who conduct their service technician training at the college. Through these relationships, Shoreline has successfully attracted employer investment in the Automotive Service Technician (AST) associate's degree program. Employers invest heavily in the AST degree program, providing full scholarships to nearly all students (at a cost of approximately \$6,000 per student). Constructing and equipping the Professional Automotive Training Center (PATC) was largely funded through cash and in-kind contributions from automotive dealers, manufacturers and suppliers. Employers continue to supply the training center with new cars and tools for instructional purposes.

Employer investment in the new GST program thus is an outgrowth of the industry's investment in the more advanced degree. The auto dealers association is playing an important role by convening employers, surveying their needs, and working to gain industry acceptance of the new GST position. The association also has advocated for a \$1 per hour pay differential for individuals entering jobs with the GST certification. For both the General Service and Automotive Service technicians programs, dealerships and automotive service shops also provide paid internships.

As a part of the GST program, a new Auto Skill Panel has been established to develop and communicate career ladder pathways in the sector. The Auto Skill Panel, which is comprised of 50 industry representatives as well as community organizations, has further strengthened the program's interaction with employers. The panel addresses a range of industry issues including standards in the work environment. It is playing an important role in getting employers to understand and value the GST Certificate.

Shoreline and its partners expect that this program will lead to bottom-line benefits for employers in the form of increased retention, improved customer satisfaction and a better skilled labor pool upon which to draw. As the GST program proves its value, program staff hopes to continue expanding industry sector investment.

Outcomes

In 2006, 11 Adult Basic Education students and eight ESL students completed 36 credits of industry standardized content, and nine credits of paid internships. Seventeen of these students received their Certificate of Proficiency as General Service Technicians – an industry recognized technician title, as identified by the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence. Eight of these students are now working for dealerships; five of them are sponsored by these dealerships in Shoreline's auto service Associate in Arts and Science programs and another is being flown to his new employer's industry-specific training in California throughout his employment. Six other GST graduates have found work in the Independent Auto Repair shops, and franchises, all making between \$12 and \$17 dollars an hour. Other students have gone on for further education.

In 2007, nine of 14 students graduated in the ABE class; three of these students have been accepted into the Associate in Arts and Science degree program pending their placement in dealerships. Shoreline staff are expecting 100 percent job placement between dealerships, independent shops and franchises. Fourteen of 15 ESL/GST students are entering their third quarter of classes, and several already have been hired or sponsored by auto corporations for additional training.

Employer response to the program has been positive and there have been more employers seeking interns than there are available students. Five GST students, who had previously unsuccessfully applied for admission into Shoreline's manufacturer-sponsored associate degree automotive program, have now been admitted into that program, demonstrating that the GST can serve as a feeder for these manufacturer-specific programs.

In September 2006, Seattle Jobs Initiative partnered with South Seattle Community College to start another GST program for their low-income customers; the success of Shoreline's project, and SJI's participation in the Auto Skill Panel housed at Shoreline, were instrumental in SJI's adapting the GST. In June 2007, the Seattle/King County Workforce Development Council (the local WIB), will co-sponsor a Sector Information Forum focused on the automotive service sector, as it has done in three other high-growth industry sectors. The purpose is to educate employment specialists and community-based organizations about high-growth sectors, so they know which ones might be best suited to their customers. Shoreline staff believes that its success with the GST has been the

primary driver for convincing the local workforce systems of the value of responding to the needs of this industry sector.

Financing

The GST program was launched with a \$1.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor through the President's High Growth Job Training Initiative. Grant monies leveraged an additional \$1,615,778, including donated vehicles, tools, simulators and scholarships. The \$1.5 million grant is part of a \$6.3 million auto industry workforce development effort by the U.S. Department of Labor.

In 2006, the GST program was approved for Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) funding by Washington's post-secondary education system. I-BEST provides funding for colleges to pair an Adult Basic Education or an ESL instructor with a vocational instructor to work together to develop and deliver instruction. Courses taught under I-BEST are funded at 1.75 FTEs per hour of instruction.