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prepared to enter the workplace where they can acquire the hours of experience they need to write their Red-Seal exam, uninterrupted, and it helps employers to retain students as they no longer need to break from the job to return to school.

“What training facilities are experiencing here in B.C., as well as the rest of the country, are poor attrition rates. In other words, students are not returning for the second and/or third levels of the programs, due to financial issues or their employer has problems scheduling a return back to school,” said Mark Deroche, chief instructor for Collision Repair and Refinishing at BCIT.

BCIT also offers a 26-week Automotive Refinishing Technician foundation program.

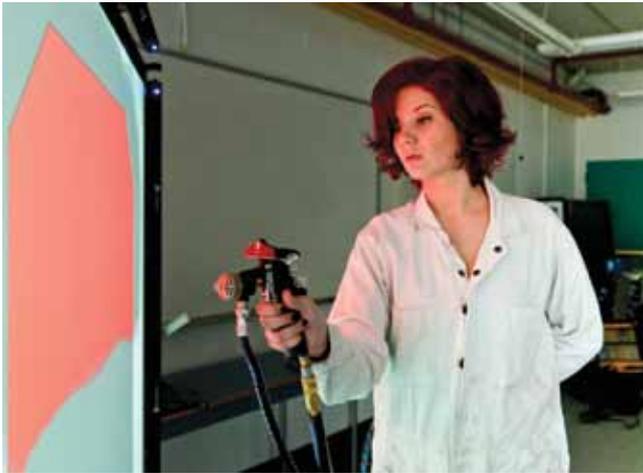
Last fall, the school introduced a virtual reality paint training system for use by students in both courses, allowing them to practice proper spray painting and coating techniques in a simulated 3D environment.

“Virtual Paint is one example of how technology can really be an asset to the enthusiasm of the student as well as being a great teaching aid in the classroom,” said Deroche. “Students can hone their skills using virtual technologies, [and] instructors can use the system to visually re-enforce theory in the classroom immediately not having to wait until the class is in the spray booth.”

Deroche said they have seen marked improvements in students who have had the opportunity to practice using the virtual paint system, which allows them to track their progress and focus on areas of improvement. Due to the high demand for the tool, the school is considering purchasing additional systems, and making them available to industry professionals who want to upgrade their skills.

Deroche said the school also partners with companies such as PPG, Car-O-Liner, ICBC, and 3M to enhance its programs with new equipment, updated information and technology.

“BCIT really supports its trades programs in terms of equipment and instructor development,” said Deroche. “Instructors are encouraged and supported to continuously receive upgrade training. Students also benefit from the companies that BCIT partners and works together with.” ■



Photos: courtesy British Columbia Institute of Technology

BCIT has introduced a virtual reality paint training system.



(CRTC) program this fall.



Photos: courtesy British Columbia Institute of Technology

BCIT offers a 41-week Automotive Collision Repair course, and a 26-week Automotive Refinishing Technician foundation program.



they have a really good chance of being employable.”

Hayashi said the program includes training on automotive refinishing as well as collision repair. “It’s one way to get people into the trade. Painting is kind of like the carrot in front of them – it’s something that people are really interested in,” he said. “It makes the program more complete now. Instead of just doing body repair, we can do the whole scope of it.”

Once a strong foundation-level program has been established, Hayashi hopes to expand CNC’s offerings to include apprentice-level training. He also hopes to grow the facility into a hub for all types of collision repair training in the north by opening it up for manufacturers’ training programs, new product demonstrations, ICBC training, and more.

Okanagan College

Okanagan College in Kelowna is also introducing a new Collision Repair Technician certificate (CRTC) program this fall. Jeff Francis, chairperson of the Collision Repair Department, said the college is replacing its 36-week blended foundation-level program with a new 41-week program that focuses solely on collision repair. The program will enable new students to complete all three levels of automotive collision repair apprenticeship concurrently, while enabling Level 2 and Level 3 apprentices to join the program in progress to complete their training.

“Repair technology is increasing exponentially and it is vital for training programs to keep pace. The new program, which includes the latest I-CAR curriculum, will produce a graduate prepared to enter today’s workforce with a much higher skillset level than in the past,” said Francis. “It’s a win-win situation for the students in the CRTC and their future employers who will now experience a seamless and more profitable apprenticeship timeline.”

Francis said the students will need to complete the required work-based training before they can complete their apprenticeship and write the Inter-Provincial Red-Seal Exam. However, rather than alternating between shop and classroom training, they can now complete all levels of technical training consecutively upfront.

“It’s just a different model. We’ve been offering a blended collision and paint program since 1999 but industry’s training needs in 2012 are understandably different and require a much more focused approach to training. With today’s high tech environment in the shops, we feel that the student having more experience and knowledge prior to entering into the shop will be a big asset for the employer,” said Francis. “We’re not discounting or diminishing traditional apprenticeship training. In fact, we will still offer levels 1, 2, and 3. This is just an efficient alternative for a student at the beginner level to gain a higher level of knowledge prior to entering in to industry.”

British Columbia Institute of Technology

British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) also has a 41-week Automotive Collision Repair course, which has been running for 5+ years. The program also enables students to complete their foundation and apprentice level training consecutively. This means students are better



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Photos: courtesy Okanagan College

Okanagan College is introducing a new Collision Repair Technician certificate



A UFV first-year class with a '53 Ford F100 in orange primer. The truck, now painted blue, is used to promote the program. Photo: courtesy University of Fraser Valley



In 2005 Nick Penner competed in the Skills Canada B.C. competition (automotive collision repair). After winning, he then participated in the Canadian National Skills event, held in Edmonton, AB, and won gold. Nick is now an auto collision and refinishing instructor at the University of the Fraser Valley. Photo: courtesy University of Fraser Valley

body repair, the program also introduces students to basic components such as sheet metal repair, MIG welding, plastics and composites, undercoats and topcoats, and much more. Classroom training is complemented by field trips to auto body shops, including custom paint shops, where students can sample new techniques firsthand. Many are also given the opportunity to work on their own vehicles during the year.

By the end of the program, students are ready to enter the auto body and paint industry. Most will still be required to complete a probation period with their employer before being signed on as an apprentice, where they can gain the required shop hours they need to

move on to Level 2 of their training.

While UFV doesn't offer further apprentice training programs, its entry-level course is helping to meet the need for apprentices in the industry. "We're trying to take in a lot of entry-level people to get more apprentices out in the stream," said Penner.

College of New Caledonia

UFV is not the only school focused on meeting the industry's need for apprentices. The College of New Caledonia (CNC) is planning to launch a new foundation-level collision repair technician training program this fall.

The 30-week program will be housed in CNC's new 75,000-square-foot Technology

Education Centre in Prince George, making training much more accessible for northern residents who want to pursue a career in the collision repair industry.

"We're going to be providing a much, much needed service that's long overdue," said program instructor Byron Hayashi. "It will be less of a burden for people in the trade or people who are wanting to get into the trade."

Hayashi said the course is designed teach individuals with little or no mechanical repair experience all of the basic fundamentals of collision repair, including welding, plastic repair, framework, refinishing and more. "We cover so many disciplines. It's really well-rounded," he said. "When [the students] leave,

Students attending CNC in Prince George will enjoy the new 75,000-square-foot Technology Education Centre.

Photos: courtesy College of New Caledonia





Automotive Training and Apprenticeship in B.C.

by Pat Rediger

Many colleges are currently introducing changes to their programs to ensure the courses they offer meet the needs of their students and the industry.

Stiff competition to attract new people to the trade combined with a fast changing industry has made for exciting and challenging times for automotive training and apprenticeship providers in British Columbia. Here is an overview of what some B.C. colleges are offering right now.

Vancouver Community College

At Vancouver Community College (VCC), this means getting students involved in the industry before they have even completed high school. VCC partners with school districts in the Lower Mainland area to enable students to earn trades training credits while completing their secondary education. This means students can complete their Automotive Collision Repair Technician certificate and be ready to start the next levels of apprenticeship straight out of high school.

"It's a huge step up. You get a foot firmly

placed in the door of the industry," said Johanna Polkki, program assistant for the Automotive Collision Repair and Refinishing department. "It's a big boost, especially if kids have that mechanical, hands-on aptitude and they're interested in this career. It's a great opportunity to try it first-hand and make contacts in the industry. We've had a lot of success with this program."

The program is eligible for funding through the Accelerated Credit Enrolment in Industry Training (ACE IT) program offered by the Industry Training Authority of B.C. This means secondary school districts can access funds to help pay tuition and other costs associated with industry training, and even provide financial assistance to individual students in paying for college while still attending high school.

VCC offers flexible learning models for school districts outside of the Lower Mainland, enabling students to take the

course via an online component and classes taught in their own high schools. Currently, Victoria and North Okanagan participate in a combined automotive collision cohort that delivers foundation training and level one collision credentialing.

In addition to these secondary-school programs, VCC provides foundation training in collision and refinishing, as well as traditional apprenticeship. Based on industry standard, feedback, and demand, VCC continues to offer numerous intakes throughout the year for all collision, prep, paint, and glass apprenticeship levels.

University of Fraser Valley

At the University of Fraser Valley (UFV), meeting the needs of students and industry means going beyond the standard curriculum to give the students of their auto collision program a complete view of what the industry has to offer, with a special focus on custom paint jobs and vehicle restoration.

"At this program, we really try to expand to give students a broader sense of what's out there," said Nick Penner, UFV's auto collision and refinishing instructor. "They get a really good idea, at the end of it, of what they want to do."

The university is just finishing the third year of its new Automotive Collision Repair and Refinishing certificate program, which is housed in UFV's five-year-old, \$21.6 million Trades and Technology Centre at Canada Education Park in Chilliwack, B.C.

Students complete a 35-week, entry-level, blended auto collision program through which they receive first year credit toward both their collision repair training as well as their prep technician training.

"Basically they come here with no past experience – straight off the street – and then we teach them the basics," said Penner. "At the end of the program, they can choose if they want to go into the body side of it, or the painting side of it."

In addition to learning the basics of auto



Photo: courtesy Vancouver Community College

VCC instructor, David Cross, and a '67 AC Cobra built by the department in conjunction with the NASKARZ program. NASKARZ is an award-winning program designed to promote the social inclusion of young people from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside into automotive, social, and educational opportunities. NASKARZ is a partnership between Ray-Cam Cooperative Centre, Vancouver Community College, and Vancouver Police Department. The Insurance Corporation of B.C. credits NASKARZ as one of the initiatives that led to 71% multiyear reduction in car-theft in Vancouver. For more information, visit www.nascarzprogram.com