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Sep 19, 2012

Governor Jindal Announces Funding for Center for Excellence in Auto Technology

BATON ROUGE – Governor Bobby Jindal announced a commitment of \$13.9 million in capital outlay funding to build a Center for Excellence in Auto Technology at Baton Rouge Community College.

The Governor emphasized that the new center will serve as a training ground for students who want careers in the auto industry and also help fill a need of the auto industry in Louisiana for more skilled workers.

The Jindal Administration will be seeking approval for the funding of this new facility at the State Bond Commission.

Governor Jindal said, “As part of our efforts to keep our kids here at home and grow our economy, one of the key things we look at is what industries are growing and what type of skills our people need to get jobs in those industries. One of the industries where we expect to see significant growth is at auto dealerships, specifically jobs for auto technicians. In Louisiana, recent data shows that there are over 2,700 open auto mechanic and technician jobs in Louisiana, and that number is expected to grow by 17 percent by 2020. Without question, this is a growth industry, but we aren’t filling the positions available right now .

“Today’s announcement is about closing this gap. If we are truly going to grow our economy and have the best skilled workers in the world, then we need to solve this problem and ensure we have a first-class training program that puts our people ahead of the pack. This new facility will continue to strengthen our community and technical college system, keep our sons and daughters here at home and continue to grow Louisiana’s economy.”

The All Star Automotive Group, Louisiana Auto Dealers Association, BRAC and a consulting group studied the local auto industry’s specific workforce needs and what actions could be taken to better prepare people for jobs in the industry. The study found that:

- Louisiana is slightly below the national average in the number of service technicians employed per 1000 vehicles.
- There is a need for nearly 250 automotive technology graduates annually to meet the industry’s demand, 10 percent of whom would specialize in diesel mechanics.
- Auto technician programs in Louisiana aren’t able to turn out highly skilled specialists that are capable of maintaining the efficiency and integrity of new vehicles.
- Auto technician Programs in Louisiana are shorter in length and less thorough and rigorous than those in most other states, which focus on state-of-the-art techniques for a longer period of time.
- Seventy-five percent of the auto graduates in Louisiana receive no more than one year of training in their programs, and fewer than 3 percent receive two or more years of training in their programs.
- Of the over two dozen auto tech training programs in Louisiana, none are capable of delivering state-of-the-art technician training that auto employers require today.

The East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority is working with the All Star Automotive Group to develop potential partnerships with automobile technicians and manufacturers. For instance, the center will serve as a site for manufacturers to host training on new equipment and will provide access to vehicle training aids that aren’t available at current programs across the state.

The 60,000-square-foot auto training facility will be located on BRCC’s new East Campus. Construction on the campus and the auto training facility is estimated to begin at the end of 2014 and be completed by late 2015.

Since 2008, the Jindal administration has appropriated and financed more than \$600 million dollars in critical higher education infrastructure investments across the state. This total includes general fund and capital outlay investments, including more than

\$225 million for Louisiana Community and Technical College campuses.

The Center for Excellence in Auto Technology will be part of the Smiley Heights – a mixed-use development that is more than six years in the making which will consist of a residential neighborhood, retail establishments and a charter school. This new development is estimated to create 3,500 new households and 20,000 new jobs in the Baton Rouge metro area by 2030. The goal of the development is to reduce school dropout rates, reduce inner city crime, and reduce traffic congestion.

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