

The Virginian-Pilot

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driver's
seat



larry printz

TCC RECEIVES NATIONAL AWARD FOR AUTOMOTIVE TRAINING

TIDEWATER Community College has received its second award from one of the world's top automakers.

The college is one of five nationwide to receive the 2007 Toyota T-Ten School Recognition Award, which honors outstanding performance among T-Ten schools.

T-Ten is an acronym for Technician Training and Education Network, which trains and certifies Toyota and Lexus technicians. There are 55 such schools in the country.

Bud Brueggeman, director of the school's automotive technology program, says Toyota rates each school on the number of graduates it produces, how many were placed, and how many are still on the job. Brueggeman notes that more than 90 percent of TCC's Toyota graduates are still on the job.

At TCC, students must be certified in two of the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence's eight areas. These certifications test future technicians on topics such as braking systems or electronics. To become an expert Toyota technician, grads must have eight ASE certifications and at least two years experience.

TCC has 14 cars in its Toyota fleet, including the Prius gas-electric hybrid.

Toyota started the program in 1986 to gain access to better training facilities. It has since transformed into a program to recruit and train technicians for the 1,400-plus Toyota and Lexus dealerships nationwide.

"Our students receive training that's on par with the experience they'd receive at corporate training centers," says Rick Lester, technician development manager of Toyota's T-Ten program.

Why is this important? Toyota sales are growing and so are the company's service departments. Finding trained technicians is difficult. "Walk into any dealership and that's what you'll hear," Lester says.

"The people most likely to become good technicians have a lot more options than they did 20 years ago. So there's a lot of competition for young people coming up."

TCC also offers general automotive training and specific programs for Honda and Chrysler. For more information, contact TCC's Brueggeman at (757) 822-5196.