

Radiologic Technology students and instructors from North Metro Tech review X-rays.



‘Win-

Unique partnerships benefit both technical college students and local businesses



‘The collaboration benefits our entire community.’

– Steve Dougherty,
North Metro Tech
President

In years past, businesses dealt with their shortage of qualified employees through a combination of wishful thinking and cutthroat recruiting. Now, however, a model of collaboration is being developed between Georgia’s technical colleges and Georgia’s businesses that benefits both technical college students — who usually graduate straight into a good job — and Georgia’s businesses, which have a guaranteed source of talent and skill.

This new model of collaboration is — in the words that everyone inevitably uses when describing these innovative relationships — a “win-win.”

Mark Haney, vice president of professional services at WellStar Health Systems, has firsthand experience. When his company found itself facing the ever-growing demand for the use of imaging technology in health care — X-rays, MRIs, CT scans — it looked for the best solution to the shortage of trained radiology technologists. At first, administrators at this

five-hospital, not-for-profit health system operating in the northwest metro Atlanta area considered starting up their own Radiologic Technology program.

Then they got a better idea.

“I realized we could start a program that would benefit both the students and WellStar,” says Haney, who is also on the local board of North Metro Technical College. Students would have jobs waiting for them after graduation, and WellStar would have a well-trained workforce. It was a perfect fit.

“Once we recognized the need, we worked quickly to create a program within months so WellStar could benefit from a pool of trained applicants,” says North Metro Tech President Steve Dougherty. *(For more on the partnership, see President’s Perspective, p. 37.)*

“For both North Metro students and WellStar,” Haney says, repeating the mantra of this model of collaboration between businesses and Georgia’s technical colleges, “it’s a win-win.”

Sharing “people power” to improve animal care



That collaborative model is catching on. A similar synergy occurred when Duluth-based animal health company Merial partnered with Gwinnett Technical College to help support that college’s Veterinary Technology program.

“Merial is a leading, cutting-edge company in the field of veterinary science and medicine,” says Gwinnett Tech President Sharon Rigbsy, “and this partnership is a true asset to our students. Not only is the company committing funds for equipment and supplies that will help make our classrooms and labs the best in the business, but it is also willing to share its people

‘Merial’s commitment is a testimony to the type of civic-minded organization our area acquired when they moved here.’

– Sharon Rigbsy, Gwinnett Tech President



power and provide guest speakers to help educate our students.”

Over the past two years, Merial has valued its relationship with Gwinnett Tech enough to contribute \$30,000 to help outfit a new veterinary technology lab.

“They needed money for lab space, and we needed to use our knowledge base in-house to get experience with teaching,” says Dr. Zachary Mills, Merial’s executive director of veterinary services for companion animals. “I needed the opportunity for my people to work with technicians to help their classroom skills.

“Gwinnett Tech has excellent facilities for seminars and meetings,” Mills says, noting that Merial has about 700 employees at its Duluth headquarters, and the company operates in more than 150 countries worldwide.

Mills says Merial finds tremendous value in the relationship, with Gwinnett Tech’s Veterinary Technology program filling a “desperate need” for licensed technicians in Georgia. To deliver quality medicine, each veterinarian needs a support staff of

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‘Gwinnett Tech’s program fills a “desperate need” for licensed veterinary technicians in Georgia.’

– Dr. Zachary Mills, Merial Executive Director of Veterinary Services for Companion Animals

Win'

By Lauren Keating



Gwinnett Tech Veterinary Technology Instructor Paige Tharpe (center) examines a sample slide with student Arlene Johnston (right).

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four licensed technicians, he says, “and qualified people are very hard to come by.”

“Their commitment is a real testimony to the type of civic-minded organization our area acquired when Merial moved here,” Rigsby says.

Mills returns the compliment.

“It’s a win-win for both of us.”

Helping the hospitality industry have a nice day

Sometimes the collaboration between a technical college and local businesses is more complex. In Athens, for example, the Hospitality Resource Panel, a group of businesses involved in the hospitality and tourism industry, used grant money to analyze the market in that college town and study the feasibility of a hospitality program at Athens Technical College.

Paul Cramer, executive director of the Classic Center,

the renovated historic fire station that is a cornerstone of Athens’ convention and performing arts business, says the study demonstrated the dramatic need for such a program. It showed that at least 110 entry-level hospitality jobs are created each year in Athens, and two-thirds of potential employers said they would pay an average of \$5,000 more a year to an employee with some kind of hospitality degree.

The partnership that developed as a result of the study, Cramer says, echoing the refrain heard across the state, is a “win-win” for both the Classic Center and Athens Tech. The Classic Center provides classroom space and its new kitchen for the college to train students in. The school provides interns to the Classic Center, which in turn can get a first look at those who might later become valuable employees.

“Our success lies not in the four walls of the building, but in the quality of people working at the Classic Center,” Cramer says. “So if we can ‘grow our own’ future staffers, that means more business, more economic development and more tourism for the region.”

To create the hospitality managers of the future, the program emphasizes customer service and trains the students in areas such as event planning, hospitality accounting, psychology, marketing and food and beverage management.

“When people think about hospitality, they think of cooking or waiters. But we are very much focused on getting students supervisory or management positions,” says Dr. Jackie Wilson, program director. The demand is so great these days that practically every graduate has a job waiting for them, Wilson says.

Athens Tech also formed a strong partnership with Motel Enterprises Inc. (which owns Athens Holiday Inn, Holiday Inn Express and the under-construction Hilton Gardens). On behalf of Holiday Inn, Motel Enterprises Inc. President Lewis Schropshire recently donated \$10,000 to the program and has sponsored four student internships at the Athens Holiday Inn.

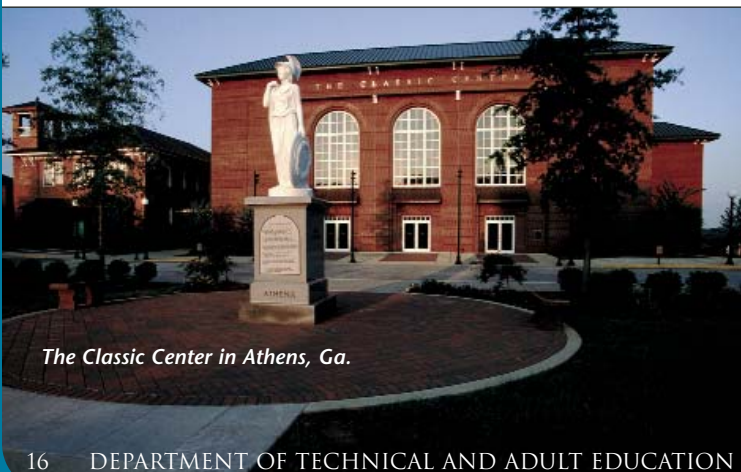
“We’re just delighted that Athens Tech has established a Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management program,” Schropshire says. “Our hotel industry is famished for people who have a blend of academic and on-the-job training.”

Currently, student Jesse Schaudies is interning at Athens Holiday Inn. He shadows a sales manager, and his business skills have sharpened rapidly. “I’ve learned a lot about ADR (average daily rate), which is a breakdown of how much profit is made per room, per day. I’ve



Chef Robert Campbell demonstrates his skills for Athens Tech Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management Program Director Jackie Wilson (far left) and students.

Top photo, below: Dede Farmer of Holiday Inn discusses design samples with Athens Tech student intern Jesse Schaudies. Center and bottom photos: Trish Cahill of Holiday Inn inspects fitness facilities with Athens Tech student Blaine Williams.



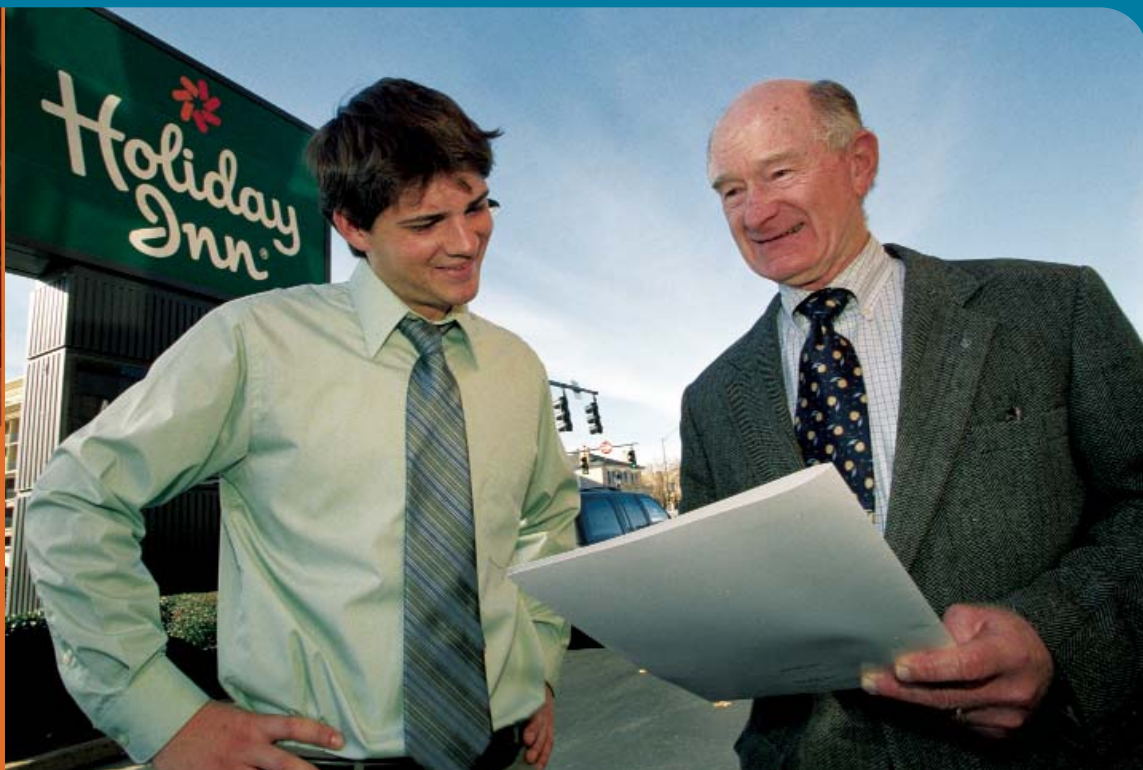
The Classic Center in Athens, Ga.

Photo courtesy of Athens Convention and Visitors Bureau.



'Our Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management program... is now flourishing and making an impact in this industry...'

– Dr. Flora Tydings,
Athens Tech President



Athens Tech Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management program student Michael Richardson (left) with Lewis Schropshire, president of Motel Enterprises Inc.

learned about how salespeople handle contracts.”

A few years ago, Schaudies’ appetite for the hospitality industry was whetted when he worked a summer job as a bellman. When he first heard about Athens Tech’s hospitality program, he signed up. “I always wanted something like this because I love working with people,” he says. “I love seeing people walk away with a big smile.”

Athens Tech President Dr. Flora Tydings says she’s “honored” to have the partnership between the school, the Classic Center and Holiday Inn.

“Through their strong support, our Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management program is not only up and running,” Tydings says, “but is flourishing and making an impact in this industry throughout Northeast Georgia.”

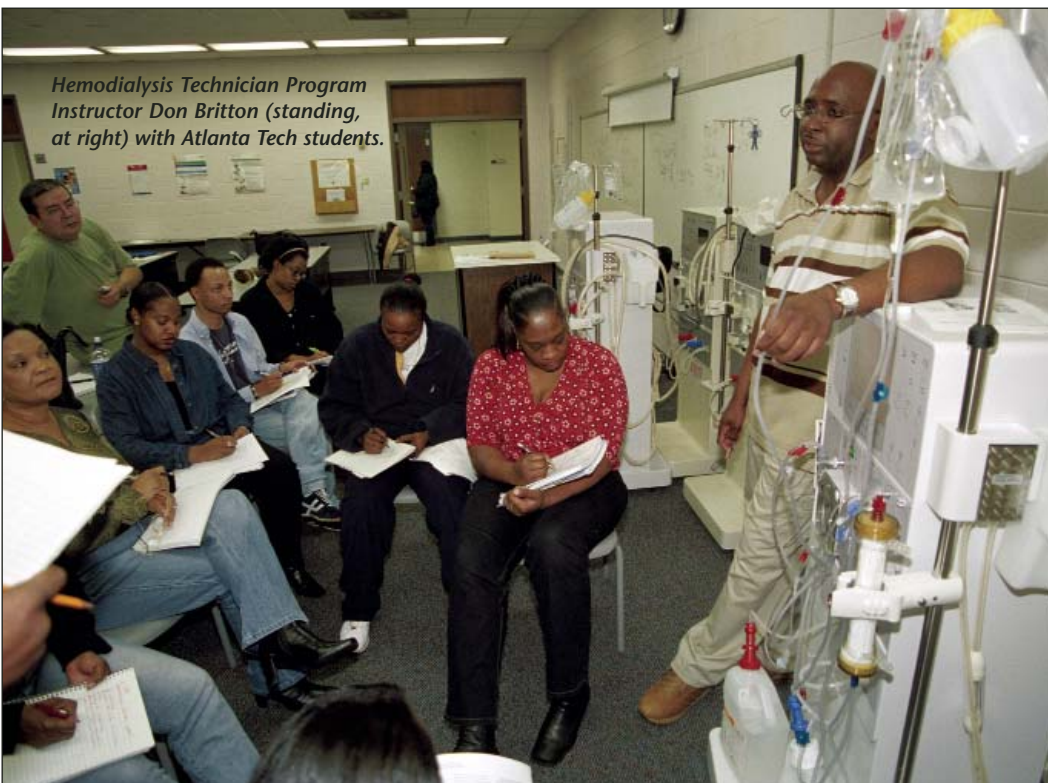
Teaming up to address health care crises

Occasionally the motivation for developing a relationship is more than just business. Atlanta Technical College’s Hemodialysis Technician program is the perfect example.

Begun in 2000, this certificate program was developed in partnership with the National Kidney Foundation of Georgia to help address the increasing incidence of kidney disease in the state and the resulting shortage of workers trained to help facilitate hemodialysis. It’s a problem the administration at Atlanta Tech takes personally.

“Our service area is predominantly African-American, and our population has a high occurrence of kidney disease,” says Lesia Jackson, director of the Allied Health Department at Atlanta Tech. “It’s a great feeling to provide a crucial service for the people and the health care industry.”

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Hemodialysis Technician Program Instructor Don Britton (standing, at right) with Atlanta Tech students.



'The competence of the dialysis technician is far more important to the patient than any other person they deal with at the clinic.'

– Chris Starr,
National Kidney Foundation of Georgia CEO

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Prior to the program's inception, the school and the foundation embarked on a year of serious curriculum research.

"We got a group of nurses and administrators together and worked with the Georgia Council of Dialysis Technicians," says Chris Starr, CEO of the National Kidney Foundation of Georgia. "A statewide, standardized curriculum for technical colleges was developed."

Currently, there are 225 hemodialysis clinics in Georgia that serve 16,000 patients, which is more than double the number of clinics (100) and patients (6,000) that existed a decade ago. By 2010,

the estimated population of dialysis patients grows to 35,000. "So there's a strong necessity of providing consistent educational experiences," Starr says. The curriculum developed by Atlanta Tech and the National Kidney Foundation of Georgia was later adopted to implement a Hemodialysis Technician program at Moultrie Technical College and Central Georgia Technical College as well.

The average dialysis patient spends 12 hours per week in a clinic, and the hemodialysis technician is the primary contact. "The professional attitude and competence of the dialysis technician is far more important to the patient than any other person they deal with at the clinic," Starr says.

The dialysis technician is responsible for inserting a needle in the patient's artery, from which blood is drawn out and cleansed, and then returned to the body. Blood pressure can fluctuate while the patient is on dialysis, so the technician must also administer saline to regulate blood pressure.

Atlanta Tech student Katrina Artison signed up for the program because several family members are diabetic and at risk for kidney disease. "I wanted to learn how to take care of my family when future medical problems come up," Artison says. Artison, who once held a job photographing newborns at Atlanta Medical Center, plans to work in a dialysis clinic. "I want to have a real impact on caring for people."

"We are unique in that Atlanta Tech is surrounded by 11 major health care facilities," explains Dr. Brenda Watts Jones, president of Atlanta Tech. "Dynamic partnerships are the key to meeting their critical need for highly skilled health professionals."



"Dynamic partnerships are the key to meeting their critical need for highly skilled health professionals."

– Dr. Brenda Watts Jones,
Atlanta Tech President



Top photo: Chris Starr, National Kidney Foundation of Georgia CEO.
Bottom photo: Atlanta Tech Hemodialysis Technician student Katrina Artison (right) practices her technique with fellow student Brandi Mays.



Getting good under the hood



The need for speciality mechanics has led to a close relationship between DeKalb Technical College and BMW.

In December 2004, BMW donated \$10,000 in scholarship funds to four DeKalb Tech students. The money will go toward providing the students with their own sets of tools required for working on the luxury autos.

“All car dealerships require that technicians own a hefty set of tools,” says Natalie Kostas, chair of DeKalb Tech’s Industrial and Transportation Technologies Department.

Four Automotive Technology students each received a \$2,500 scholarship: Nathan Mashabatu, Dawan Syed Muhammad, Patrick Carter and Steven Pittman.

The relationship between DeKalb Tech and BMW got its start several years ago, and last year the car company pushed a new innovation when it invited a DeKalb Tech student to participate in its MetroSTEP program. The program “takes our training programs and modifies them to attract people who could not afford BMW training,” says Russ Lucas, BMW’s regional after-sales manager for the Southern region.

Above, from left: DeKalb Tech’s Industrial and Transportation Technologies Department Chair, Natalie Kostas, DeKalb Tech Automotive Technology Instructor Bob Horn, BMW scholarship students Nathan Mashabatu and Patrick Carter, and DeKalb Tech Automotive Technology Instructor Frank Perry.



‘These scholarships are a testament to the quality of skilled graduates we produce at DeKalb Technical College.’

– Dr. Robin Hoffman,
DeKalb Tech President

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Top photo: Model trains used in the classroom of Okefenokee Tech's Freight Conductor program. Bottom photo: Okefenokee Tech Freight Conductor graduate Kris Overstreet demonstrates signaling.

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The innovative MetroSTEP program is important to BMW's recruitment efforts. "We need to look at fishing in other ponds: people who want an automotive career but who cannot afford full-time training that can cost \$15,000," Lucas says.

The scholarships are "an opportunity to pre-cull the students who might be interested in MetroSTEP," Lucas says.

"We know these students come from economic need. In most cases, the money is earmarked for tools. This is one of the barriers of entry to get a good internship or go out and work part-time while in school."

DeKalb Tech is proud of its relationship with BMW, which has produced strong results: a car, scholarship money and a job for a graduate.

"We are very grateful to BMW for offering these scholarships to students in our Automotive Service Technology programs and feel it is a testament to the quality of skilled graduates we produce at DeKalb Tech," says Dr. Robin Hoffman, president of DeKalb Tech.

The relationship is, she concludes, is a "win-win."

Keeping it on track

When freight transportation company CSX found itself needing an increased supply of conductors for its trains, the company approached Okefenokee Technical College with a proposition: If the college started a Freight Conductor program, the company could almost guarantee that it would hire every successful graduate.

In 2000, Okefenokee Tech became one of only three colleges in the United States to offer such a non-credit program.

CSX assigned Okefenokee Tech a specific Southeastern territory that includes Waycross, Savannah, Fitzgerald, Augusta and Thomasville in Georgia; Montgomery and Dothan, Ala.; Greenville, Spartanburg, Abbeville and Columbia, SC.

"We have recruiters who travel to those locations and hold testing and interview sessions to qualify individuals for the program," says Dr. Neil Aspinwall, VP of Economic Development programs at Okefenokee Tech.

Periodically, CSX notifies the school that the company needs a certain number of freight conductors. The school then contacts the qualified individuals and asks them if they are ready to enroll in the next class.

The training is intense: Applicants attend class full-time for 25 days. Students are trained on CSX-copyrighted material approved by the Federal Rail Association and the American Association of Rail. Three days of training in the field is required in the Freight



BMW scholarship student Nathan Mashabatu uses a digital diagnostic device on the donated 2001 700 Series BMW car.



Okefenokee Tech Freight Conductor program Instructor Wesley Proctor (far left) oversees a demonstration of proper switch usage.



“The Freight Conductor program provides a great opportunity for a lifetime career.”

– Dr. Neil Aspinwall,
Okefenokee Tech
VP of Economic
Development

Conductor program, and that takes place at the rail facilities of General American Transportation Corporation (GATX), located just three miles from the college.

“GATX has been an important partner in the success of the program,” says Aspinwall. “Without this working relationship, Okefenokee Tech would have to rent rail facilities in other parts of the county to complete this training.”

CSX is delighted with the results. “The Okefenokee Tech staff is extremely professional and accommodating. They work hard to provide solid training,” says Denise Purdie, director of conductor hiring and training at CSX.

Thorough training is a necessity for freight conductors because mistakes can have life-or-death consequences. “The rail industry is unforgiving,” Aspinwall says. “You make a mistake and you lose a life.”

CSX isn’t required to hire all the graduates of the Freight Conductor program, but most are selected. “Generally, we accept 97 percent of graduates who pass the background check and medical exam,” Purdie says. Since 2000, Okefenokee Tech has trained 494 students, and 486 have been hired by CSX.

Graduates complete several additional weeks of training at CSX before starting their first job. “There is a potential to make \$50,000 to \$100,000 a year,” Aspinwall says.

The freight conductor profession is a reliable steppingstone to advancement within CSX. Purdie notes that 100 percent of CSX’s train engineers once worked as freight conductors, along with 90 percent of yard masters (who oversee operations at a rail yard) and 26 percent of train dispatchers.

“The Freight Conductor program provides a great opportunity for a lifetime career,” Aspinwall says. **R**

Below: Okefenokee Tech Freight Conductor Instructor Wesley Proctor (in red hard hat) watches as Harlan Thornton demonstrates a three-point dismount. Right: Instructor Garland Chick (far left) uses model trains in a demonstration in Okefenokee Tech’s Freight Conductor program classroom.

