Toyota Announces New Education Initiative

BELDEN, Miss. (AP) -- Toyota Motor Manufacturing Mississippi and four community colleges are launching a partnership to train people for advanced manufacturing jobs.

The Advanced Manufacturing Technician Program gives students the chance to take two days of classroom instruction in Belden and three days of hands-on experience at Toyota's Blue Springs plant.

Participants will take classes their home college two days a week and will have a paid internship at Toyota three days a week. The internship will pay $16.50 per hour. Students will earn an advanced manufacturing associate's degree in five semesters.

The agreement is with Itawamba Community College, Northeast Mississippi Community College, Northwest Mississippi Community College and East Mississippi Community College.

"If manufacturing becomes more technical in nature — the machinery becomes more technical, more complicated — than what you really have to have in order to grow your business is a pool of highly technical, skilled people," Toyota Vice President For Administration David Copenhaver said Monday.

Officials said the goal is to make north Mississippi's industrial work force stronger.

"This partnership with Toyota, where they are funding a person to be in class to earn a technical degree in a specific skill is job security," Itawamba Community College President David Cole said. "It's also job security for Toyota because it guarantees them a long-term, reliable, advanced technology work force."

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