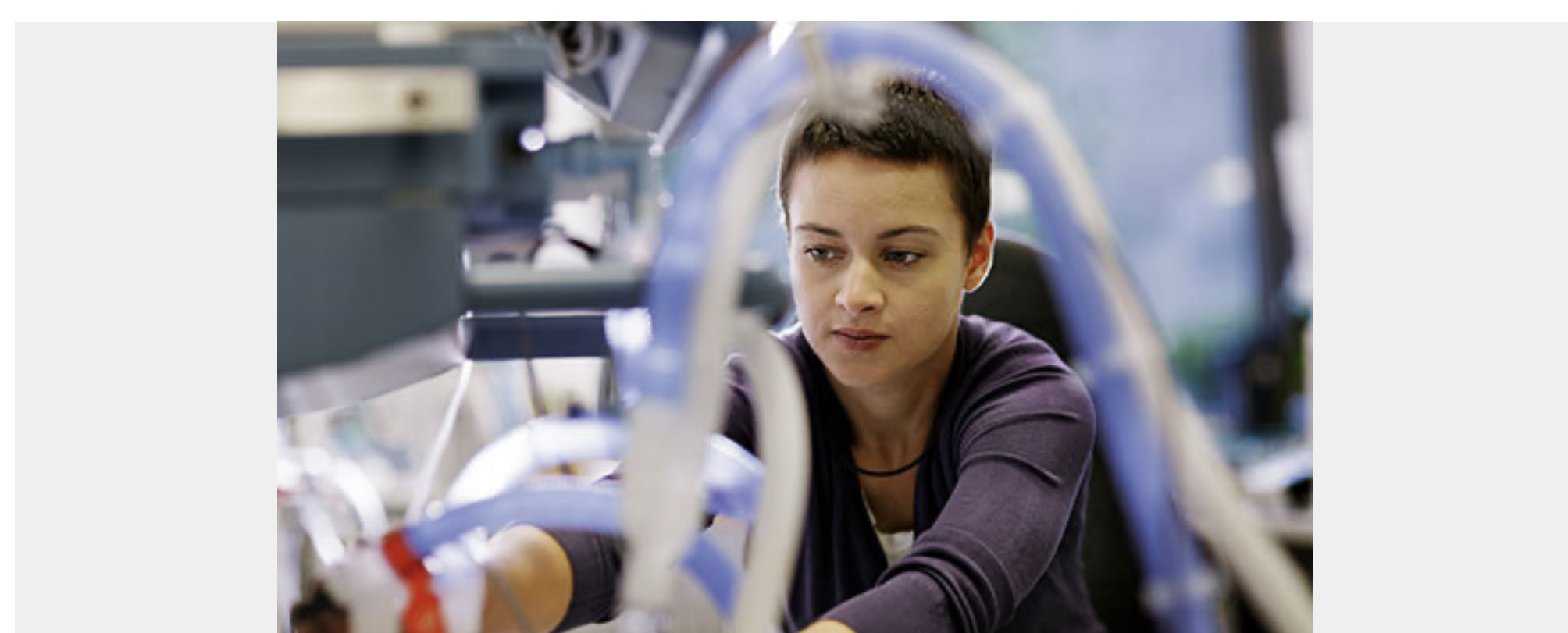


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HEALTH CARE

Banner Health, MCC create new certification program for biomedical tech jobs

Medical equipment repair jobs expected to grow 19.1%



[COURTESY OF MESA COMMUNITY COLLEGE]

Banner Health and Mesa Community College have joined forces to create a new certification program and fill the little-known medical equipment repair industry with skilled workers.

Posted Monday, August 30, 2021 9:57 am

By Lindsay Walker
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Banner Health and Mesa Community College have collaborated on a new certification program to fill a much-needed hidden gap in the health care industry.

The two have worked together since 2018 to develop the Biomedical Equipment Technology certification program that will provide hands-on training for in-demand biomedical technology jobs repairing and servicing medical equipment used in hospitals, clinics, medical device manufacturers, home health care providers and more.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, jobs for the medical equipment repair industry will grow 19.1% during the next decade. EMSI Career Coach estimates the median salary for medical equipment repairers in Maricopa County is \$44,544.

According to Perry Kirwan, Banner's vice president of technology management/ ENTECH, this has been a little-known and little-understood issue in the industry for some time.

"The industry has more people leaving the industry mainly due to retirement than we have people entering the field," he said. "Part of the issue of people entering the field, at least in Arizona, is that there is no place for them right now to receive education for these exciting careers. Another important aspect is how programs like this are marketed to the high schools and middle schools out there. Many people don't even know of the existence of our industry in terms of building strong and stable careers along with doing some very interesting work."

Kirwan said Banner approached Mesa Community College for a number of reasons: its close proximity to the Banner Desert Medical Center, which is across the street for easy access to internships or training, MCC's Allied Health Department, and the school's course offerings in related fields, like electronics and life sciences, that go hand-in-hand with the new certificate.

Banner was hands-on in the development of the new two-semester program, which is unique in Arizona. Kirwan said that, nationally, the industry is at a 15% to 20% deficit in terms of available positions versus the number of people skilled to fill those positions.

"Banner Health was the main partner in the program development," said Kirwan. "Our team helped define and create the scope of the program, work with college administrators on developing it as a certificate program for now, content in the course curriculum, recommendations of textbooks used to teach the program, making internships available to students that enroll in the program, and there is a good chance we'll even provide instructors to help support it."

Michael Voss, dean of instruction for the Career & Technical College at MCC, said the East Valley school was uniquely prepared to create this coursework because of its robust electronics program and only needed to add some anatomy and medical terminology lessons to apply to biomedical technology roles.

"We looked at our expertise and looked at their needs and made a determination that we actually have a curriculum that does help," he said. "The program itself is kind of underpinned by some electronics courses, which you have here at Mesa, some technology courses because people need to understand how hardware and the Internet and things interface with the cloud, so we included that. These folks need to understand medical terminology so include that course, they need to understand some anatomy so we included that."

Voss said a team from MCC toured Banner Desert's equipment repair lab in the partnership's early days to help develop the program's courses. Banner tries to repair and maintain most equipment in-house to avoid the costs of shipping them out, so having more workers in the pipeline will go a long way to help.

"You're working on humans and you need to document those repairs effectively to maintain warranty on the equipment and all that kind of stuff so printer maintenance, you know things like blood pressure cuffs and EKG machines, you know they need a certain amount of annual preventive maintenance to make sure that it's still functioning and reading the way that it should," he said.

Additionally, Voss said the field's job opportunities are never ending, especially when you add vendors and manufacturers to the list of potential employers. Banner, Dignity Health and HonorHealth also offer tuition reimbursement, so employees can have the option to get additional training or degrees once they get their foot in the door.

"It's a nice springboard, so they can go get that first technician job," said Voss. "And then once they get some work experience, then they can get some industry certifications to further their career. I think this is a really great program, and with meaning because the technology that you're supporting supports all of our hero health care workers and the patients."

The number of students enrolled in the program is not yet available, but Voss said there was a list of 24 students interested when courses were first announced. Classes are beginning this fall, and the first graduates are expected in May.

The classes can be mostly completed online, with the exception of hands-on electronics education, and are a low-cost investment with job security.

"I would say every major metro area will probably need to start up a program like this or at least have access to one," said Voss.

Author profile for Lindsay Walker, News Editor at Phoenix. Includes bio: "Lindsay is a Phoenix native and is thrilled to be reporting in her hometown. After spending several years in advertising after college, she switched gears and graduated with her master's degree in journalism at Arizona State University in 2019. When she's not writing, you can usually find her reading a book or playing with her family's dogs." Twitter: @AzNewsmedia

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Keywords

Phoenix, Mesa, health care, Banner Health, Mesa Community College, biomedical technology



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