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High School Auto Challenge 2016 hosted by Mesa Community College

Dec 16th, 2015 · by Mesa Independent staff report · 0 Comments

A full-time student scholarship will be at stake when high school students from across Arizona test their automotive testing and diagnostic skills during the inaugural Maricopa Community Colleges' Arizona High School Auto Challenge.

Automotive instructors from three of the Maricopa Community Colleges that offer post-secondary degree and certificate automotive programs banded together to present the challenge, which replaces a similar competition co-hosted for 22 years by Ford Motor Company and AAA. The Auto Challenge will rotate among Mesa Community College (Southern and Dobson Friday, April 22, 2016), GateWay Community College (2017) and Glendale Community College (2018).

"In the past, automotive high school instructors relied on the Ford/AAA competition to showcase their top students in a hands-on experience," said Mesa Community College Automotive Faculty Bryce Bond. "As of Sept. 1, 2015, the Ford/AAA competition was sadly ended, leaving a huge void.

"Historically Ford/AAA would offer employment," he said. "We will offer education through scholarships."

The high school and post-secondary Automotive Technology instructors see this as an opportunity to get students excited about the latest advances in the automotive technology field.

"Automotive technology changes rapidly and the Auto Challenge will give students a real-life experience diagnosing and repairing vehicles using the most current technology," said Steve Folks, GateWay Community College automotive program director. "It also highlights the importance of encouraging talented young people to pursue Automotive Technology associate degrees and certificates, and careers as automotive service technicians."

The Challenge qualifying exam will be administered online Jan. 27, 2016. It is formatted specifically to provide students the experience of sitting for the ASE (Automotive Service Excellence) certification tests, the industry standard. The top ten qualifying schools will send a team of two seniors and one alternate to Mesa Community College to participate in the on-site portion of the competition in April. During this portion of the Challenge students will demonstrate their automotive diagnosis and repair skills by fixing a "bugged" vehicle.

"With three well-respected automotive programs that focus on domestic and imported automotive technologies, manufacturer's certifications and high levels of job placement, hosting the Auto Challenge aligns with our goal of encouraging students to pursue college degrees and certificates in this field," said Glendale Community College Ford Asset Instructor Don Davis. "It's a three-way win scenario: scholarships for students mean more trained, workforce-ready graduates who become contributing employees to the local economy."

Additional information and the link to register for the exam may be found online at mesacc.edu/autochallenge.

Awards, tools and scholarships will be presented to students during the event.

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Special to the Independent/Opinion Column that on Saturday, Dec. 5. See Page 5 for more photos and a story by the club's president.

Higher education in Mesa: A model for increasing accessibility?
By Charles Clark
 Special to the Independent
 Providing access to higher education and helping students find success there has been a challenge our nation has struggled to address for decades. In recent decades we have witnessed political leaders continue to grapple with how best to address the subject.
 Often times, the discussion has fallen into the trap of trying to simplify a highly complex issue, whereas the reality is there is no simple answer. However, right here in Mesa we are experiencing higher education institutions, in partnership with our city and community as a whole, making tremendous strides in the right direction and perhaps providing a model for other places to follow.
 Over five years ago Mesa launched its Higher Education Initiative, and today it is very easy to see the fruits of that labor. Now in addition to Mesa Community College there are institutions such as Western University at Mesa, Benedictine University at Mesa and Ugori Loma University at Mesa.
 However, what is perhaps the biggest accomplishment of the Higher Education Initiative is not the abundance of choices offered, but rather the fact that Mesa has attracted institutions that are attentive to the needs of the individual student and recognize that there are many factors that contribute to making higher education more accessible.
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