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Autry Tech is training for now, for the future

By Phyllis Zorn, Staff Writer

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ENID — There's always something new at Autry Technology Center as the school stays abreast of the latest needs of employers — and the training needs of students.

Teri Holle, director of business and industry services at Autry, said the school's mission to provide training that puts students to work — and keeps their skill sets marketable — means the school always is looking to know the latest employment needs and trends.

"The interesting thing about Autry is that about 30 percent of our programs are new each year," Holle said. "But we also offer some of the oldest training programs, because we have to meet their basic needs."

Companies have to consider the needs of current employees and those of the future, Holle said. Autry works to fill both.

"I think the biggest trend we are seeing is the trend toward virtual training and immersion training," Holle said.

Virtual training

Virtual training involves use of simulators, such as truck driving simulators and welding simulators.

"Virtual training is the training as close to reality as you can get using technology," Holle continued.

Although equipment is expensive, the school has found ways to collaborate with others to offer virtual training. For example, when virtual technology was needed for heavy equipment operation training, Autry formed a consortium with several entities in Oklahoma



Wes Dotson, Travis Perrin and Jeremy Cowley (from left) train on heavy machinery simulators from CAT at Autry Technology Center. Teri Holle, director of business and industry services at Autry, said the school's mission to provide training that puts students to work — and keeps their skill sets marketable — means the school always is looking to know the latest employment needs and trends. (Staff Photos by BONNIE VCULEK)



Terry Smith and Christian Collins (at left) use a new Lab-Volt solar/wind energy training system during their mecatronics engineering class at Autry Technology Center. Teri Holle, director of business and industry services at Autry, said the school's mission to provide training that puts students to work — and keeps their skill sets marketable — means the school always is looking to know the latest employment needs and trends. (Staff Photos by BONNIE VCULEK)

to obtain grants to purchase virtual training equipment. Autry can then lease the equipment as it needs it for student training.

Thus the school's heavy equipment operator training is new for 2011.

"It's more cost effective and more green," Holle said.

Immersion training

Immersion training is when students are trained in the environment they will be working in instead of a classroom.

Autry works closely with area employers to help them address current and future needs, Holle said. Faced with an aging work force, companies want to be prepared for the time when key employees retire and others will have the opportunity to move up in the company.

"We're seeing a trend in which companies are seeking to do succession planning," Holle said.

Technology training

Autry also works with companies in using technology to prevent and predict maintenance issues by using hand-held technology devices such as thermal-imaging, smoke reading and vibration analysis, said Melissa Baker, director of communications and marketing for Autry. Just a few years ago, companies relied on experts using logarithms and ultrasonic techniques that were costly and labor intensive. Using new technology empowers their employees to be more efficient and cost effective.

Health industry training

The health industry poses much employment opportunity, so Autry has developed as many training courses as it can to meet this demand, Holle said.

In the manufacturing industry, area employers are looking for employees with third-party certification and licensing instead of the Autry-issued certificate of the past, Holle said.

"Now skills are set by a national standard, and they say whether those people have met those skills," Holle said. "We're seeing a huge trend in that."

Autry has developed training programs that meet the licensing and certification standards employers need.

Autry also offers training tailored to meet employers' specific needs instead of trying to teach skills for which the employer doesn't really have use. Employees may take only one module of a course instead of the entire course if that meets the specific knowledge the company needs them to know, Holle said.

Some other new training programs at Autry are Spanish for Health Care, Elements of an Effective Website Made Simple, Facebook Marketing Campaigns For Business and Twitter — Use it to Build Your Business.



Chrystal Korok and Aaron Beagley (from left) use a VRTEX 360 Welding Simulator at Autry Technology Center. Teri Holle, director of business and industry services at Autry, said the school's mission to provide training that puts students to work — and keeps their skill sets marketable — means the school always is looking to know the latest employment needs and trends. (Staff Photos by BONNIE VCULEK)