



program overview

professional development
employer involvement
results

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Goal

The goal of the Apprenticeship 2000 program is to offer high school students opportunities in technical career fields and employment after graduation. The Apprenticeship 2000 program, in return, offers sponsor employers a trained workforce of which that employer contributes to a significant portion of the students training. Recognizing the need for trained craftsmen, Blum Inc., along with Daetwyler Corporation in 1995, established the Apprenticeship 2000 program in an effort to train their own workforce. After graduation from the program, students can earn upwards of \$34,000 per year in their selected career fields.

Curriculum

The Apprenticeship 2000 program is an 8000 hour program that spans four years of training. Upon graduation, students earn an AAS degree in Manufacturing Technology, and a Journeyman's Certificate awarded by the state of North Carolina. At graduation, each apprentice will have invested approximately 6400 hours inside one of the six sponsorship companies. The supplemental company instruction reinforces the student's classroom training by taking the classroom examples into real life situations. At Blum, company training is broken into three distinctive categories, each with their own sub categories. The three main categories are: Section One — Basic metal working/bench work, Section Two — Machining (mill, lathe, CNC) and Section Three — Specialization.



Employer benefits

Training itself is expensive; however, the lack of a qualified work force is just as costly in other ways. New innovations in our products bring more complex assembly methods, and building expansions. In the market of today, products have to be produced rapidly with a high degree of quality that is efficient for the customer, and the company.

By training young people in basic machining, applications of engineering, and maintenance, Blum technicians become highly skilled to meet the needs of industry. Graduates of these technical career fields, offered by Apprenticeship 2000, have the ability to design, machine, document, and assemble changes virtually on demand. This makes each person and the company much more flexible to changes in trends, market conditions, and machine performance.

Benefits of dual training

Benefits for apprentices include hands on learning in a manufacturing environment with dual training. Dual training is accomplished by combining college classes with company instruction. Upon graduation, apprentice graduates also gain four years of job related experience relative to their chosen trade. This is important in that the majority of college graduates, when they graduate, typically have little to no work experience by comparison. At Blum, as apprentices, students in the past have represented the United States and local area school systems in the World Skills Competitions hosted by VICA. In May 2005, an apprentice from Blum received the 4th Year Outstanding Apprentice Award. Other achievements include the College Tech Prep Gold Award in March 2006 for Excellence in Worksite Learning.

Successful track record

Based on history, Blum has retained 80% of its apprentice graduates after leaving the program. At no time before, during, or after graduation from the apprenticeship program are students asked to sign or commit to employment. Students stay at their own free will with no pressure by the company to do so.

When the apprentice graduates the program, each student is guaranteed a job in the career field chosen by them while in apprenticeship. In production areas with the largest amount of graduates, production efficiencies are increasing. About 10 % of our graduates move on to additional classes at Central Piedmont after graduation and finish out other related AAS degrees. Another 7% of apprentice graduates move on to a four-year degree. For further education, Blum has a reimbursement policy for its employees. Blum supports the decision of each graduate, or employee for his or her choice in education.



Supporting institutions

Institutions involved are the Lincoln county school system, Gaston county schools, Catawba county schools, Charlotte/Mecklenburg schools, Cabarrus county schools, Iredell/Statesville schools, Central Piedmont Community College and the North Carolina Department of Labor.

History

In 1995 Blum, in conjunction with the Daetwyler Corporation of Huntersville North Carolina, developed the Apprenticeship 2000 program. Currently, the vice president of engineering at Blum, along with Blum's apprenticeship manager, head the Blum segment of Apprenticeship 2000. Every quarter, representatives from each partnership company meet. Partner meetings are in constant review of the curriculum for the program, changes that should be implemented and updates on changes that were made.



Overview

When students are in their senior year of high school, they may spend four hours at school and four hours inside a partnership company. At Blum, students begin their Section One training (ref. Summary of curriculum) during this time. After their high school graduation, students transition from part-time to full-time apprentices. At this point, each apprentice will now spend four days training inside the partnership company as a full-time employee with one day and one evening class per week at Central Piedmont Community College. When apprentices are ready to graduate the apprenticeship program, they will have experienced four years of company related training, with 1600 hours at Central Piedmont Community College. For all apprentices, partnership representatives coordinate the related classroom instruction with faculty from Central Piedmont to ensure completion of the AAS degree.

Classroom

At Blum, apprentices are paid to attend day classes as if it were their normal workday; therefore, the company attendance policy stays in affect at Central Piedmont. Inside the company, students are never without training instructors that monitor this process. The training instructors support each apprentice in cases that involve their school performance, i.e., homework assignments and the student's college attendance. In addition, the training instructors point out classroom examples in the work place for understanding and are also there to ensure the students safety while learning on the job site.



Objectives

The main objective of the apprenticeship at Blum is to train our own work force to fit technical needs and at the same time contribute to the community. Blum feels very strongly that helping young people in the community is a benefit not only for the company's success, but for the individual as well. Blum would like to play an essential role in improving technical training in the private sector by providing schools as much support as possible.

Performance

At Blum, apprentices are subjected to a performance evaluation once per month. The evaluation includes: Job Knowledge, Quality, Efficiency, Dependability, Initiative, Adaptability, Team Ability, Safety, and Punctuality. Each topic is given a score and then rated. Every six months these ratings are combined with the students GPA at Central Piedmont College. As a result, students receive higher pay as they gain experience and knowledge. This also gives the student a direct role in their pay based on their individual performance.

Investment

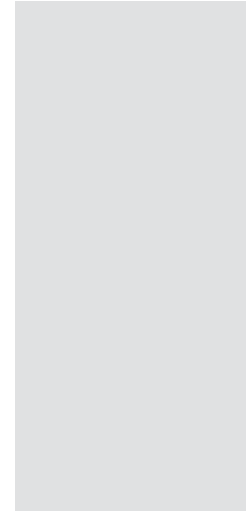
Inside the Apprenticeship 2000 program, each partner company is responsible for their own training investments. Blum invests on average \$160,000 into each student. This value is an approximation, which includes the total investment contributed by the company at the time of graduation from the program.

Blum utilizes a 4800 sq. ft. training area which houses \$1.8 million dollars of training equipment. In addition to the central training area, there are also specialization-training locations inside the company. Blum evaluates the program on a regular basis and has purchased training equipment as needed to keep up with our production demands.

Trainers and mentors

Blum uses training instructors for the basic foundation of the career fields each apprentice enters. Once the apprentice obtains a certain amount of job knowledge and safety, mentors inside the company are used. Mentors help guide apprentices, and pass on job-specific knowledge and ensure the safety of each student. Each mentor also ensures the safety of the student. The mentoring process allows the student to “phase-in” to an area or department they have trained for.

Outside the company, at their request, Blum has provided technical advice to local area school systems regarding training equipment, and use of that equipment for their students.



Uniqueness

The Apprenticeship 2000 program is unique in the sense that a consortium of companies, as well as local area school systems, support the program. Each year, brochures are printed and distributed in area high schools that introduce choices for students interested in technical careers.

Informing teachers

When needed, Blum will host teacher workshops, or provide tours of the facility. An open relationship with our local schools serves as a way to introduce teachers to the company, and apprenticeships. Currently, counselors from various county school systems visit all partnership companies on an on going basis. While in the partnership companies, counselor's check up on students that have either graduated from the program, or are currently enrolled. In addition, counselors also bring the names of students interested in looking at the program by joining our six-week orientation. School counselors typically visit throughout the year.



Informing the community

In the first quarter of each year, students, and parents are invited to attend an open house hosted by one of the partnership companies. This serves to introduce parents and students to the company, the apprenticeship, and the time schedule of our six-week orientation.

Fostering other programs

Blum has, in the past, hosted the North Carolina Department of Labor's "Train the Trainer" workshop. The NCDOL provided education to 22 attendees on training apprentices in the work place. Six companies from the Charlotte region participated.



Gauging effectiveness

Apprenticeship programs are very costly for companies; therefore, their popularity is low. However, with commitment and constant affirmation, apprenticeships are on the rise in North Carolina. With that mentioned, it then becomes hard for anyone to immediately gauge the effect of training and effectiveness a single company with an apprenticeship program.

Even with support from the North Carolina Department of Labor, many companies and educational institutions, have questions when they are considering their own apprenticeship.

In the past, Blum has hosted numerous visitors referred to us both by the NCDOL, as well as the United States Department of Labor. When touring our facility, school administrators, business representatives and teachers have a chance to see and ask questions about our Apprenticeship 2000 program. They also gain an understanding of the commitment that is necessary to successfully implement their own program. On a student level, Blum has seen a rise in production efficiencies in the areas where apprentice graduates are concentrated in.

