

APPRENTICESHIP

Preserving Institutional Knowledge While Growing the Next Generation of Talent

A Long Beach Community College Connects Pre-Apprenticeship Students



Apprentices with Caterpillar from left to right: Christian Lowe, Jesus Maveira Jr., Mary Carlson and Thomas Kerrins-Torres

As apprenticeship programs develop across California, program administrators often struggle to find ready, qualified candidates. Pre-apprenticeships, when linked to apprenticeships, serve as clear pathways for students looking for earn-and-learn opportunities. In spring 2018, [Long Beach Community College](#) (LBCC) opened up a pathway to Caterpillar's two-year-long ThinkBIG apprenticeship program with a 10-week pre-apprenticeship program. The pre-apprenticeship provides students the training necessary to service heavy-duty diesel engines such as those used in construction equipment, fire trucks, port equipment and recycling plants.

While the ThinkBIG program operates in several locations across the country, the apprenticeship model is still developing in California. Caterpillar, who has partnered with [San Joaquin Delta College](#) to offer the apprenticeship, welcomed the opportunity to work with LBCC to connect prepared candidates to the apprenticeship. Prior to admission, applicants attend an orientation session, take a non-graded pre-screening test, and complete two rounds of interviews. Cohorts are limited to 15 students working out of the Pacific Coast campus, and LBCC plans a minimum of four cohorts over the year.

To develop the 150-hour curriculum, LBCC established an industry committee, bringing local distributor Quinn Caterpillar and other local employers together to identify essential training competencies. A curriculum designer developed the training program. Most of the training is hands-on with heavy equipment, complemented by basic math, English and soft skills training.

Occupations for heavy duty equipment mechanics are projected to grow 9% statewide by 2026, and offer workers in the state a median wage of \$26.75 per hour, making the earn-and-learn pathway particularly lucrative. Pre-apprenticeship graduates are invited to apply to the two-year apprenticeship with Caterpillar, or to connect to other local industry partners for possible employment.

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October 2018