

Dept. of Corrections: Inmates complete Nicolet College Mechanical Maintenance Program

Posted on Monday, Jun 18, 2018

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RHINELANDER - Department Secretary Cathy Jess joined Nicolet College President Richard Nelson, family, and friends to congratulate five McNaughton Correctional Center inmates graduating from Nicolet College's Mechanical Maintenance program.

The Mechanical Maintenance program is a 14-week, 13-credit program which provides fundamental instruction in hydraulics, pneumatics, and electronic devices commonly used in the manufacturing sector. With this credential, inmates are qualified to work as production workers, machine operators, utility workers, factory laborers, or helpers. The median wage for these positions in the Nicolet College Technical College District is \$16.12 per hour.

The inmates, who are in minimum-security status, represent part of the Department's efforts to train inmates nearing release for in-demand careers in the community. Over the last two years, the Department has devoted significant resources to increasing educational and vocational opportunities for inmates, which includes hosting short-term intensive academies across the State of Wisconsin along with local technical colleges in carpentry, welding, CNC machining, industrial maintenance, and animal husbandry.

These academies result in industry-recognized credentials inmates can utilize to find family-sustaining jobs in the community in an effort to reduce recidivism. The Department has also purchased a mobile lab which provides instruction in CNC machining and received funds in the 2017 - 2019 biennial budget to purchase additional mobile labs which will provide instruction in welding and industrial maintenance.

DOC Secretary Cathy Jess said: “We welcome the opportunity to provide a chance for inmates to learn critical skills and connect with employers in the community to fill open jobs. Using labor market information, the Department is identifying careers where inmates can quickly receive training and find entry-level employment to begin crime-free lives in the community and become productive citizens.”

“The inmates can now proudly call themselves Nicolet College graduates,” Nicolet College President Richard Nelson said. “They’ve demonstrated through hard work and dedication that they have earned this distinction, something they will be able to carry with them for the rest of their lives. The skill sets they now have will serve as a strong cornerstone as they move forward and build their lives.”