

Smoky Hill Auto Technology Partners with Subaru of America

An exciting announcement for unprecedented industry access came in a partnership between Smoky Hill High School's Auto Technology Program and Subaru of America.

Smoky Hill was one of 2 schools in Colorado selected for this partnership this past August, and we are excited about this opportunity! Called Subaru-U, Our students and instructors now have access to Subaru's entire technical training library used for their dealership personnel. Mr. Manley will be implementing this online training beginning in January, 2017, giving his students a distinct industry-involved edge.

When our students apprentice at a participating Subaru dealer, they will be able to audit those classes taken in class at Smoky Hill, earning those industry certifications, and making these courses "concurrent enrollment for Subaru." This is the type of seamless school-to-industry partnerships Mr. Manley and Smoky Hill relish.

This curriculum – when coupled with the many donations of mockups from our national Subaru Training Center in Aurora – marry online training with late-model, hands-on product training: A perfect training marriage.

Subaru has teamed with several dozen secondary schools and colleges to improve automotive technician training and steer some of the graduates to its dealerships. Because of a nationwide automotive technician shortage, Subaru decided to go this route rather than have its dealers seek employees who weren't necessarily trained to work on the brand's vehicles, said Dan Vespertino, technical service director for Subaru of America.

The company has selected 58 schools in 25 states for its program. They include Mount Hood Community College in Gresham, Ore.; Cerritos College in Norwalk, Calif.; and Santa Fe College in Gainesville, Fla.

The hands-on and Web-based curriculum is part of the new Subaru University, known informally as Subaru-U, which also includes a partnership with an automotive technician program in Camden, N.J., home of the brand's future headquarters. Subaru-U uses the same Internet training that dealership employees take.

"We came up with the idea to go about things a little differently than others had done it in the past," said Vespertino. "We wanted to put together a program that captured the hearts and minds of secondary and postsecondary students."

The new program tries to capitalize on the appeal that Subaru products -- especially the high-performance WRX -- have for younger people. "We have some hot product. These cars really excite these kids and we saw an opportunity to get into the schools' programs and offer the schools access to our management system," Vespertino said.

"By doing that, if we plant the seed early, come graduation time they are more likely to look at Subaru as a career opportunity."