



VEHICLE BODY TECHNOLOGY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

October 29, 1996

Present: Todd A. Bass, Rochester Hills Collision, Inc.
Richard Allen Buck, Chrysler
Brad DePalma, Spectrum Autobody
Rick Driscoll, Automotive Body Specialist, OCC
Victor Fowler, Ferris State University
Elizabeth W. Hagemeister, AAA Michigan
David Hollinger, Oakland Technical Center - Southeast Campus
Scott E. Irwin, Oakland Technical Center - Northwest Campus
Sally Kalson, Coordinator of Cooperative Education, OCC
Phil Krantz, Installers Service Warehouse
Daniel R. Manthei, Oakland Technical Center - Northwest Campus
Doug McDonald, Collex
Mac Morrow, Retired Former Owner, Morrow Collision, Inc.
Dr. Carlos Olivarez, Dean, Academic and Student Services, OCC
Doug Riddering, Counselor, OCC
Dennis W. Rivett, I-CAR/Allstate Insurance Co.
James Rogers, I-CAR/Crest Industries
Ruth Springer, Secretary, OCC
Randy I. Stier, Automotive Color Supply Co.
Jonathan George Tomkins, Oakland County International Airport

1. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Rick Driscoll welcomed the group and thanked the members for coming. He invited those present to introduce themselves.

2. Review of Needs Assessment

Dr. Carlos Olivarez reviewed the Vehicle Body Technology Needs Assessment published by OCC's Office of Institutional Planning & Analysis in February, 1993. As he presented each point, he asked the group if they agreed with its conclusions.

Researchers found that, across the nation, low enrollments in collision repair classes have resulted in the closing of many programs. OCC has the only remaining college level auto body repair program in the Detroit area. At OCC, between the academic years of 1982 and 1992, the number of students enrolled in Vehicle Body courses declined 43 percent, and the number of credit hours taken declined 41 percent. The needs assessment referred to a reciprocal joint program agreement with Macomb Community College which permitted Macomb students to enroll in certain OCC programs, including Vehicle Body Technology, at in-district rates, and OCC students were able to attend Plastics Technology classes at Macomb at in-district rates. However, Macomb discontinued its Plastics program, so the reciprocal agreement for all programs was discontinued.

The needs assessment reported that, in Michigan, those involved with auto body repair are required by law to pass a certification exam in Collision Repair and in Uni-Body Repair, and that nearly all employers surveyed required Collision Repair certification. The group agreed that this certification is still mandatory, but stated that it is not being enforced. State certification has now taken a back seat in the industry to other types of certification, such as I-CAR.

Researchers found that, between the years 1988 and 2000, employment in auto body repair in Michigan is expected to grow 13 percent, averaging 250 job openings annually. Employers reported that the average salary for an entry level auto body technician was \$20,400. The average salary for an auto body technician was \$36,445. The group agreed with this finding.

3. Need for Curriculum Revision

The needs assessment reported that about a quarter of the students surveyed indicated that they were taking Vehicle Body classes to prepare for a new career. About 72 percent were enrolled for personal development.

A question was raised as to whether students are bringing in their own cars to work on. Those familiar with the program responded that many students work on their own cars. The previous faculty member responsible for the program ran it as a hobby shop, so that is what many people expected to do in class. That faculty member retired in June, 1996. Dr. Carlos Olivarez reported that students become angry now when the College tries to instruct them, rather than let them work on their cars. Some students take the same class several times in order to work on their own cars. OCC now has a new policy under which students are not allowed to take the same class more than three times. If they try to do so, the computer system will stop them from enrolling, and only a counselor or dean can override the computer to enroll them. Hopefully, this will discourage those who have been using Vehicle Body classes as a hobby shop or business.

Dr. Olivarez asked the group whether they thought the program would attract a sufficient enrollment if it was operated as a career training program. He reported that the College is thinking of offering

a non-credit auto body program through a different department of the College. This would provide an opportunity for those wishing to work on their own cars, while charging appropriate fees so as not to subsidize a person's business. Credit classes would still need to have at least 15 students enrolled. This could solve the problem of having the two types of students in the same class. Mr. Driscoll suggested that a series of courses, such as Auto Restoration I, II, and III could be offered. One Welding and one Auto Body course would be required before taking these classes.

Dr. Olivarez pointed out that, if students were not working on their own cars, the College would have to provide materials for students to work on in the courses. It was suggested that perhaps insurance companies could provide the College with salvage vehicles. Mr. Dennis Rivett suggested that it is possible to use non-automotive props in teaching vehicle body repair, such as small stampings of aluminum to repair, and cardboard cutouts to learn assembling and sectioning components together.

Mr. Vic Fowler reported that, at Ferris State University, the Auto Service program receives cars that are donated by automobile companies. When that program has finished using them, the Auto Body Shop has students practice on those vehicles to learn basic skills. Then they go on to working on live customer cars. Mr. Dave Hollinger and Mr. Scott Irwin reported that they do the same in their classes at their campuses of Oakland Technical Center. Basic skills are taught using donated vehicles, but there is a need for damaged cars from customers in order for students to go through the entire process of auto body repair.

The needs assessment reported that the majority of employers surveyed have difficulty finding qualified personnel. Most employers indicated that they value experience and technical skills over formal training. The group agreed that it is difficult to find qualified people for the available jobs. Many body men and painters are retiring now and in the next few years, and there is no way to fill the void they will leave.

In response to a question from Dr. Olivarez, Mr. Irwin reported that most graduates of the OTC auto body programs either go on to college or begin working immediately in a shop. He further commented that he agrees with everything that has been said about the hobby shop character of OCC's Vehicle Body Program up to now. In the past, he would not have encouraged students to continue their studies at OCC. They had been well taught at OTC and were able to get a job because employers knew the quality of employee they were getting. There was no need for them to attend OCC. Mr. Irwin stated that the proposal for curriculum changes and improvements to the OCC Auto Body Repair Program prepared by Mr. Driscoll is the best thing he has seen in this area at OCC in many years. But now who will put their heart and soul into the program and do a really effective job of implementing these changes and teaching these courses? If the College limits itself to adjunct faculty, he wonders whether they will have the necessary dedication to the program to make it successful. Mr. Irwin believes that Mr. Driscoll is the person who would do the kind of job that is needed. As a college credit program, courses need to be oriented to students who wish to get an associate degree and then continue their studies at a four-year college.

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Dr. Olivarez pointed out that College funds for hiring new staff are limited. Other areas requesting staffing have a large number of students taking their classes. He asked the group how he can prove to those making the financial decisions that a full-time faculty for this program is more important than for other larger programs.

Mr. Hollinger suggested that they tour other campuses to see that, if a college has a quality program, more students will be attracted to its classes. Good examples are Washtenaw Community College, Lansing Community College, and Alpena Community College. To request information and a tour, the College could contact Tom Winter, Auto Body Instructor at Alpena, and Lester Jordan, Auto Body Instructor at Washtenaw. Mr. Hollinger was unsure of the instructor's name at Lansing.

Mr. Todd Bass mentioned that, if a tour is planned, he would like to attend as well.

Mr. Fowler described the Auto Body Program at Ferris State University. It is a two-year program which ladders into the Automotive and Heavy Equipment Program. There is a four-year degree program, but it is not Auto Body specific. There are currently 32 people in the Auto Body Program, which has a capacity for 60. Mr. Fowler believes that, once OCC has a quality program in place, students will come. However, OCC will need to make an effort to sell the program to young people and their parents. He believes there is enough room in the industry for all the Auto Body programs in the state to increase their enrollment. Plenty of jobs are available, so many that the need for workers is not being met.

Mr. Hollinger suggested that a good way to market the program would be through participation in the competitions conducted by the Vocational Industrial Clubs of America (VICA). There are a number of VICA chapters in this area and a competition is held every year. Involvement could provide OCC with an opportunity to become acquainted with participating programs and to market OCC's Auto Body Program.

Mr. James Rogers described the kind of training which is provided by I-CAR. He stressed the importance of students learning how to replace vehicle parts on all kinds of vehicles, since that is needed in the industry today, rather than knowing how to repair. He also emphasized the need for good, regular workers who come to work every day. Today's industry needs people who are book smart and also computer smart.

Ms. Elizabeth Hagemeister mentioned that, at AAA Michigan they hire claim representatives, both trainees and those with experience. When hiring trainees, they are looking for people with college degrees, but they will hire people without a degree if they have good technical experience. They need people who have good interpersonal skills, the ability to learn to work on a computer, and good oral and written communication skills. Their employees must be customer service oriented.

Mr. Rogers suggested that it would be helpful if students could learn to replace air bags and other parts. Insurance companies often replace parts today, since there are not enough craftsmen available in the industry to repair parts. A frame damage class is a good idea, but normally in a shop, only one person is working on the frame, while most workers are doing spot repair. Shops are looking for people who can take parts on and off. They are not looking for people to repair rust. Painting classes are a good idea too, but each shop has its own system and may want to train its own workers. It is also essential that workers have a good attitude. The level of the industry has improved, so a person who wants to work clean can find clean shops in which to work.

The group agreed that few body shops have one person doing all types of repair. Most shops have specialization, in which each person does a particular type of work. There is no need for each person to have a thorough knowledge of painting or other specializations.

4. Review of Lab Equipment

After a tour of the Auto Body Lab, Dr. Olivarez asked the group for their comments and suggestions regarding the facilities and equipment.

It was pointed out that there is a need for a mixing machine. If students are not going to be trained to repair rust, then most of the equipment in the lab is not needed. There is a need for a good library of repair manuals for all types of vehicles. Mr. Dennis Rivett offered to provide the lab with sets of motors books, which he said he receives every month.

It was suggested that the lab should have a prep deck, since most have shops have them. Mr. Driscoll explained what ventilation equipment the lab does have, and stated that, in general, ventilation in the lab is quite good. But he agreed that it would be nice to have a prep deck as well.

It was suggested that OCC staff visit Fisher Refinishing to see what kind of equipment they have and model OCC's lab after their set-up.

A question was raised as to whether OCC has the financial resources to renovate the Auto Body Lab in that way. Dr. Olivarez responded that the available funds must be distributed between all College programs. They must be able to document that it is worth investing funds in a program because the expenditure will result in increased enrollment. The College must be careful to spend the taxpayers' money wisely.

Mr. Dan Manthei reported that he has worked with OCC for several years, especially in the area of advanced placement of high school graduates. As a result of conversations with OCC administrators, he believes that, if the program was revised to meet the national skill standards, funds would be available to support it. Mr. Manthei suggested that funds and other resources are available in the

business community. OCC needs to think in terms of business partnerships and other sources of funding in addition to millage dollars. He suggested that the advisory committee form subgroups to work in the areas of physical resources, financial resources, and others.

Dr. Olivarez responded that Mr. Driscoll has been given release time by the College to work on the revision of the program. He suggested that committee members who would be willing to work with Rick in some of these areas give him their name and phone number, and he will get in touch with them.

Mr. McDonald suggested that a business plan needs to be put together for the program. We are really asking people to be investors in the program, and a business plan is needed to show to those investors. Mr. McDonald offered to work with Rick on putting together a business plan for the program.

Mr. Brad DePalma mentioned that new guns are needed in the lab. Mr. Driscoll reported that there are some high tech spray guns in the lab now. He said that a frame machine is needed and new hand tools.

Mr. Hollinger suggested that, before the College updates sanders and grinders and purchases new hand tools, they should consider obtaining a vacuum system. This should be a high priority, as it would keep the shop clean. He believes that three important priorities should be a vacuum system, a mixing machine, and a frame machine. Prep stations are also important.

Mr. Rivett suggested that OCC staff visit a couple of shops and try to duplicate the equipment they have and how they do their work. He offered to take Mr. Driscoll along with him for a day as he visits shops. It was suggested that Collex would also be willing to let him look at their shop.

Several members of the group stressed the importance of seeking partnerships with industry. Mr. Fowler stated that business partnerships are one of the things that keeps the program at Ferris strong.

5. Co-op Program

Mr. Phil Krantz and Mr. DePalma spoke of the need for an active co-op program. They stated that, when they took the Cooperative Internship classes which are part of the current curriculum, no one ever checked up on their internship situation. Mr. DePalma said he got an A in the class, and he was, in fact, working where he said he was, but no one would have known if he wasn't.

6. Certification

Mr. Rivett and Mr. Rogers provided the group with information about the I-CAR program. Mr. Rogers explained that I-CAR teaches people who are already working in the industry. The I-CAR Educational Foundation teaches students the same material. The same standardized curriculum is used worldwide. Mr. Driscoll mentioned that he hopes I-CAR will consider using OCC as a site for their training classes.

Mr. Hollinger added that National Institute for Automotive Excellence (ASE), I-CAR, and Michigan State certification are requirements for technicians working in the field. The secondary and post-secondary level training programs at OTC and OCC are working toward National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation, Inc. (NATEF) certification, which is required for training schools.

7. Conclusion

Dr. Olivarez thanked the group for their attendance and participation. Mr. Driscoll will be meeting with some of the committee members and working with them to put together plans for the program. Dr. Olivarez will see that all members receive copies of these plans. The entire advisory committee will meet again during Winter or Spring term, 1997.

Committee Recommendations

1. That the Auto Body Program be oriented to students who wish to get an associate degree and then continue their studies at a four-year college.
2. That OCC seek to hire a full-time instructor for the Auto Body Program.
3. That OCC staff tour other campuses, such as Washtenaw Community College, Lansing Community College, and Alpena Community College, to observe successful Auto Body programs.
4. That OCC consider marketing its Auto Body Program through involvement in VICA competitions.
5. That OCC place emphasis in the Auto Body curriculum on instruction in part replacement, including the replacement of air bags, rather than on instruction in repair and rust removal.
6. That OCC consider including in the Auto Body curriculum courses that would provide instruction in interpersonal skills, computer skills, and oral and written communication skills.


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7. That OCC seek to obtain a mixing machine, a frame machine, and a vacuum system for the Auto Body Lab.
8. That OCC seek to obtain a prep deck for the Auto Body Lab.
9. That OCC seek to obtain new hand tools for the Auto Body Lab.
10. That OCC staff visit auto body shops, such as Fisher Refinishing or Collex, to see what kind of equipment they have and how they do their work, and model OCC's lab after their set-up.
11. That OCC seek to develop business partnerships which could result in making equipment and other resources available for the Auto Body Program.
12. That a business plan be developed for the Auto Body Program.
13. That a more effective co-op program be developed for the Auto Body Program.
14. That OCC seek NATEF certification for the Auto Body Program.
15. That I-CAR training be included in the Auto Body curriculum.
16. That interested advisory committee members work with Mr. Driscoll as a part of subcommittees to carry out various aspects of the needed program development.

Respectfully submitted,



Ruth Springer

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