

ASET launches pilot program STEM day camps for EIPS students

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Thanks to the Association of Science and Engineering Technology Professionals of Alberta (ASET), a group of Edmonton students received hands-on exposure to the exciting and diverse profession of engineering technology at the Nov. 26 pilot of ASET's STEM Camp Series.

Two students from Fort Saskatchewan High School participated in the pilot, which was hosted at the NAIT campus in Edmonton, alongside 13 other Elk Island Public School (EIPS) students from Lamont, Ardrossan, and Strathcona County.

Camp attendees participated in workshops that gave them hands-on experience with what it is like to work as an electrical engineering technologist and mechanical engineering technologist.

"I think it was roaring success," said ASET CEO Barry Cavanaugh.

"This was the first one and it was a pilot for camps that we hope to do more often as it goes forward. But it went really well with the students and really well with the instructors and I just think it fulfills exactly what we were hoping to do; to introduce students to a potential career that they might not even know exists."

As part of the electrical engineering technology workshop, students were given the chance to produce a miniature version of a motor control circuit (a control circuit ensures that the motor is started and stopped in a safe manner), which was ultimately employed to control a model crane.

The second workshop, mechanical engineering technology, taught students to build the model crane for which the motor control circuit was devised. Students were instructed in computer-aided design (CAD), using 3D printing for manufacturing the crane and CAD for assembly of it. "They were excited about it and really got into it," said Cavanaugh.

"Not only that, but when a little problem developed, they all pitched in to try to solve it. So what they experienced was a common thing that technologists experience on a daily basis. And that's really exciting because they really got to see what the profession is all about."

In between workshops, students learned about the difference between the engineering technology and engineering professions, and the many disciplines and occupations that exist within engineering technology. "I think young people often feel an uncertainty as they get to the end of

their secondary education because they don't have enough information about where their career might go, and we wanted to help with that," explained Cavanaugh.

"The truth is that these technologists are all around us and they're doing all kind of things that we don't even realize on a daily basis.

So, we brought an urgency to help the public understand what these technologists do. Some of these kids may wind up as technologists and some may not, but at least they'll understand who's around them and what they're doing."

According to ASET's 2021 Salary Survey, electrical engineering technologists and mechanical engineering technologists starting their careers as technologists-in-training command average annual salaries of approximately \$68,000 and \$61,000 respectively.

Technologists-in-training are graduates of polytechnics/technical colleges and have engineering technology diplomas, which is typically completed over a two-year period. They are registered with ASET and in the process of accumulating the necessary field experience to earn their designations as certified engineering technologists (CETs).

Technicians install cable and phone, monitor traffic, work in labs, and serve as process workers in refineries and manufacturing. Technologists design plans with engineers, create commercial buildings and return well sites properly to nature. They ensure fast-acting telephone networks, smart bus connections, proper water pressure at home, perfectly clean water to drink, reliable natural gas service and electrical power, smooth roads for driving, and responsible oil and gas exploration/production/processing and distribution.

ASET is the professional self-regulatory organization for engineering technologists and technicians in Alberta. ASET currently represents approximately 17,000 members, including full-time technology students, recent graduates and fully certified members in 21 disciplines and more than 120 occupations across a multitude of industries.

The recent day camp pilot at NAIT, conducted with the support of Elk Island Public Schools, marks the first of ASET's efforts to partner with school boards across the province with the goal of developing student outreach activities in association with the four polytechnics/technical colleges: NAIT, SAIT, Red Deer Polytechnic and Lethbridge College. The plan is to host at least one day camp at each of the four institutions annually.