



AUTOMOTIVE ADVISORY BOARD

Tuesday, September 23rd, 2025 1:00 pm, Airport Campus Lecture Hall (2300 Airport Rd)

MEETING MINUTES

Helena College Mission: Helena College supports our diverse community by providing the paths and tools necessary to assist learners in achieving their educational and career goals.

Program Mission: The mission of the Automotive Technology program at Helena College is to provide entry-level technicians training in the fundamentals of automotive repair and maintenance with respect to the general automotive industry.

ATTENDEES

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- Eric Croft - Capital High Automotive Instructor
- Ronnie Robertson - Helena High Automotive Instructor
- Adam Schiedermayer – Helena Ford Motors
- Howard Reed - Helena Motors
- Tyler Walker - Ford Motor Company
- Julian- Ford Motor Company
- Bruce Knudson –Montana Auto Dealers Association
- John Johnson - Placer Motors

HELENA COLLEGE MEMBERS

- Stephanie Hunthausen – Executive Director of CTE and Dual Enrollment
- Cheryl Ravenscroft – Director of K-12 Partnerships
- Kathy Mortimore –Skilled Trades Academic Advisor
- Jason Mogensen – Automotive Instructor
- Dave Jones – Automotive Instructor
- Melissa Mousel – Program Manager -CTE

AGENDA

Program/Department Updates

- Automotive welcome packet
 - This packet was put together by Jason and Dave to let all students know the expectations of the program before classes began in August.
- 1st year cohort is full at 16 students. 2nd year cohort has 7 students.
- Helena College automotive students will have “Inspection Days” Nov. 24th and 25th.
 - Students will inspect cars from the community.
 - Students will practice soft skills by interacting with “customers”.
 - No repairs will be made.
- Recent purchases include a Hunter Maverick Tire Machine and updated the shop carbon monoxide exhaust system.
- 8 of the first-year students will be looking for work later this semester.
- First-year students are required to take a technical math (fall semester) and a communications class (spring semester), two afternoons a week. Both classes are tailored for trades students. Technical Math has the option of being in person or online. Communications has in-person attendance required.
- Capital High School and Helena High School updates
 - Both high schools will be getting new facilities within the next year or two.
 - Capital High students are using Automotive Manufacturer Curriculum. They are getting Ford certification.
 - Some of the students are already working in a few area shops.
 - Capital has 20-26 students in each class.
 - Helena High focuses on the student ACE certification.
 - Helena has 3 full 1st year classes, one full 2nd year class and a smaller 3rd year class. The 3rd year class does some live work.
 - With the push for work-based learning, Helena High wants to have an articulation with Helena College.
 - Helena High students job shadow in two different shops for a total of 5 hours to get a feel for the environment.

Board Discussion

- Student Preparation
 - What skills or level of understanding do you expect from an entry level lube tech?
 - Interview questions: Tell me about yourself. Why should I hire you? In a perfect world, what would be a perfect job would be? Where do you see yourself in 4-5 years?
 - Looking for personality; looking for those who want to improve.
 - An excitement to want to learn and willing to learn.
 - Have a driver's license and able to pass a background check.
 - Communication skills – being able to talk with service manager.
 - What is the student's career path goal?
 - Expect 3-6 months on lube rack to prove themselves.

- Look at moving to a mentorship and expect own rack about 2 years from starting in the shop.
- Ford Ace program can help advancement and can transfer to other manufacturers.
- Upcoming Needs
 - Are you/how are you seeing Artificial Intelligence utilized in industry?
 - This is helping with warranty work. Employees write up what they work on and AI writes repair order, but the employee still needs to go over the report to make sure it is correct.
 - AI is a tool, not a crutch.
 - Ford uses specific AI tools.
 - Sales teams use Chat GPT to help with marketing and promotion language.
 - Is anyone aware of options for donated newer vehicles?
 - WrenchWay can help find vehicles and/or parts in a geographical area for donations, guest speakers, etc.

Wrap-Up & Summary of Takeaways

- What should we include in the meeting minutes as our key takeaways from the meeting?
 - Helena College can continue to help students prepare for job interviews and emphasize the importance of communication skills. In particular, we can prepare them to articulate who they are and where they want to be in 5-10 years.
 - The Automotive Industry is beginning to use Artificial Intelligence for things such as writing job stories as well as in a marketing/sales capacity.
 - Helena College and high school automotive programs should look into the Ford Ace program as well as the WrenchWay platform.