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## MCC offers classes in working with robots and cobots: AIT program fast tracks industrial technology careers – Arizona Education News Service

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MESA, Arizona – June 27, 2022 – The Mesa Community College (MCC) **[Automated Industrial Technology](https://www.mesacc.edu/programs/automated-industrial-technology)**

(<https://www.mesacc.edu/programs/automated-industrial-technology>). (AIT) program offers certificates and degrees for students wanting to learn to work with robots, including the increasingly popular cobots, which work alongside humans.

AIT skills are increasingly used in many fields and industries. Automation technicians install, configure, maintain, troubleshoot and make modifications to automated industrial equipment. They work with machines involved in businesses including semiconductor manufacturing, pharmaceutical packaging, food and beverage production, and distribution such as in big warehouses where robots move boxes on conveyor systems, sort, create pallets of materials and move materials out.

Ken Hackler, director of the MCC Automated Industrial Technology program, said, “This is a great industry for exciting tech careers and good salaries. The work is hands-on, interesting and you are involved in creating products that benefit people and the community.

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“For someone without experience in industrial automation, pursuing cobots and robots training by taking the AIT program greatly increases your chance of finding a good job. For someone already working in the field, coming back and taking the robotics classes offers an opportunity to move up. Most of my students graduating this spring semester are finding jobs starting at \$30 an hour with just the certifications. The demand is growing.”

As to the differences between cobots and robots, cobots are smaller, can be moved easily by workers and have sensors and other features, which make them safer than larger robots that require buffer areas from human contact.

Hackler explained while robotics have been around for decades, over the past five years cobots have become popular, particularly in the health care and manufacturing fields, to solve employee shortages. Cobots are ideal for work that is repetitive and requires precision, which most people would find tedious and boring over time. Businesses find they can increase accuracy, safety and production with cobots.

“With the cobots, workers are teaching and supervising the machines to perform their functions, not sitting just writing code,” said Hackler. “At higher levels in the field, there is a very small amount of programming using Python, and we are working with **MITI-EV** (<https://www.mesacc.edu/workforce-development/miti>) (Maricopa Information Technology Institute – East Valley located in the MCC Downtown Center) to provide those classes for students working at companies looking to upskill experienced employees.”

Sebastian Yazzie, an MCC AIT student shared that his employer is supporting him going to school because demand for these jobs is so high. The company uses robots mainly to pick and place, grab products, scan barcodes, label that product, and ship it to the patient.

MCC offers classes on cobots and standard robots. The AIT270 Robotics I class features the Universal Robot’s Cobot and Learning Management System, where students interact directly with the cobot to program multiple applications such as pick and place, and palletizing as well as controlling an external conveyor and receiving input from external sensors to stop and start the conveyor. The AIT275 Robotics II class teaches students to program the FANUC Robotics handling tool system along with vision systems, where the robot makes decisions based on the vision camera to sort or perform rejections of parts based on programmed parameters. AIT270 and AIT275 are part of the AIT certification programs and the Associate of Applied Science in Automated Industrial Technology. In addition to the AIT CCL1 and AIT CCL 2 certification, also offered is the Universal Robot Educational Certification in AIT270, the FANUC Robot Education Certification in AIT275, and the MCCC Robotics Mini Certification for completing both robotic classes and the AIT100 Industrial Safety.

There is a great deal of information about the program and certificates as well as career opportunities offered on the **AIT website** (<https://www.mesacc.edu/programs/automated-industrial-technology>). Hackler

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says if businesses or students have questions, email him at [kennith.hackler@mesacc.edu](mailto:kennith.hackler@mesacc.edu) (<mailto:kennith.hackler@mesacc.edu>). Register for fall 2022 classes at [mesacc.edu/enroll](http://mesacc.edu/enroll) (<http://mesacc.edu/enroll>).



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