

Tech school training helps meet market demands

The State University of New York is undergoing a period of sharp change, prompted by budget cuts and calls for campuses to become more specialized. The mortuary-science program at Canton College of Technology, a two-year school, may serve as a model for creating successful specialty programs.

By MARC VIOLETTE
Ottawa News Service

CANTON — Jere Haven sat at a high laboratory table intently reviewing lecture notes for a big exam, oblivious to the molded human skulls at his right elbow. Across the brightly lit room from the second-year student was a long stainless steel refrigerator holding two human corpses on large sliding trays. Behind him, an open door revealed a room filled with a dozen open caskets.

"This is something I've always wanted to do," said Haven, a student in the mortuary-science program at SUNY's Canton College of Technology. "I like this program because we get hands-on experience with actual cadavers."

A Canton native, Haven is one of 75 students learning to become funeral directors at this two-year school of 2,000 in far northern New York.

There are 42 accredited funeral-services programs in the nation, including five in New York. Canton Tech offers the only mortuary-science program in the SUNY system.

Administrators here say mor-

tuary science, and other course offerings that provide direct job training, are why Canton Tech and the SUNY system's five other technical colleges are so important to the state.

"We offer hands on, applied programs, not theory," said Eric Pellegrino, executive assistant to Canton Tech President Joseph Kennedy. "When our kids leave here they are ready to step right in and do a job."

Executives in the funeral industry agree.

"The school has a good reputation in the business," said Michael Pignatoro, whose family owns and manages 16 Amigone funeral homes in the Buffalo area. "We have several people on our staff who graduated from Canton and they are great employees."

Besides turning out skilled students ready to enter the job market, Canton Tech administrators said their campus serves another purpose; opening the door to people who might not otherwise pursue a college education.

"More than half of our students are the first in their family to go to college," said Marie Regan, an English professor and head of Canton Tech's faculty assembly. "We give access to a new generation of college students who will be productive taxpayers, not tax takers. It's fun to see people blossom and start whole new lives here."

If tech schools like Canton are to survive in this era of change and academic downsizing, it will be because they continue to offer

CANTON COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY

- **Founded:** 1906.
- **Located:** Canton, N.Y., in the St. Lawrence Valley.
- **Students:** 5,200 full-time undergraduates.
- **Faculty-Student Ratio:** 1:18.
- **Tuition:** \$3,200.
- **Average SAT score:** Canton Tech, a two-year school, does not use SAT scores for admission.

what traditional four-year colleges do not: low cost, high quality job training.

"We're one of the biggest trainers of the St. Lawrence County work force," said Regan. "We're on the ground floor where things are happening."

Regan and Pellegrino believe Canton Tech will be more successful when SUNY administrators in Albany give tech colleges more autonomy. That way, they can create programs quickly to meet the rapidly changing needs of industry and business.

In their minds, the ideal tech school should be nimble enough to rapidly retool course offerings the way a competitive factory retools its production lines to adjust to consumer trends.

"We need to be in a position to respond quickly to the demands of the market place," said Pellegrino. "Let us control our destiny. If there is a market out there, if there is employer demand for a certain kind of training, let us do it."

But in the real world of SUNY management, gathering the nec-

essary approvals to start a new program can take years. That's too long, said Pellegrino, in a business world where training needs rise and fall in ever shorter cycles.

Back in the mortuary-science office, Donna Robinson-Bazinet, a course instructor and a funeral director herself, talked with pride about the 23-year-old program and the success of its students.

"Over the last eight years 95 percent of our graduates passed the national board exam. That's very good," she said.

Just across the hall from Robinson-Bazinet's office, Amy Kalczyński was sprawled face down on a sofa quizzing other mortuary science students before a test.

"At first I thought it would be really creepy being a funeral director, but it's not," Kalczyński said, turning to look into the mock chapel where students stage practice funeral services. "I think it's great to do work where you can help someone in a time of need. It's totally fascinating."



Photo Provided

Students at SUNY Canton's Mortuary Science class work on death masks in the restorative art laboratory.

REFORMS...

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SUNY has had its share of famous alumni. TV actor Paul Reiser, film star Wesley Snipes, Murphy Brown creator Diane English, and political cartoonist Tom Toles are among them.

SUNY should not only ask them for money, but they should tap them to be honorary committee members for individual campus fund-raising efforts, Moro said. If there's a deserving aid program for minorities and economically disadvantaged students, a fund drive with someone like Snipes lending his name could be highly effective, Moro said.

Margarita Mayo, a director with the 5,000-member Business Council of New York, suggests more campus autonomy and downsizing SUNY's central administration. She also thinks individual campuses should be allowed to charge different tuition rates based on their programs and costs.

To cut expenses, she suggests that SUNY should be allowed to charge New York high schools for the costs of remedial courses needed by their graduates who lack the math and reading skills to do college level work. SUNY says it spends about \$1.1 million a year on these remedial courses.

Debbie Thomas, a recent graduate of SUNY's Orange County Community College, thinks the state should crack down on its student aid program. About \$650 million a year is provided in tuition assistance, and

from her experience not everyone who gets state help deserves it.

"Kids are figuring out a way to beat financial aid," she said. "They're hiding money, or the amount their families earn and they're taking it from the kids who really need it."

John Gallagher, principal at Plattsburgh High School, likes the path SUNY is on of eliminating duplicative programs among its many campuses. He believes the campuses should have more individual specialties.

He also called for more agreements between two-year SUNY technical colleges and four-year private institutions where the students, if they maintain an adequate grade-point average, are guaranteed spots at the private schools in their junior years.

James Ross and Maureen Curtin of the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities, suggest that SUNY narrow its focus and privatize the system's two teaching hospitals. They also say the system should consider whether it needs its costly dental and medical schools, which employ some of SUNY's top salaried faculty.

"SUNY cannot be all things to all people," Curtin said, echoing comments by state Senate Higher Education Committee chairman Sen. Kenneth Lavalle. "It must find out what they are good at and build on that instead of trying to use their resources to fill every niche."

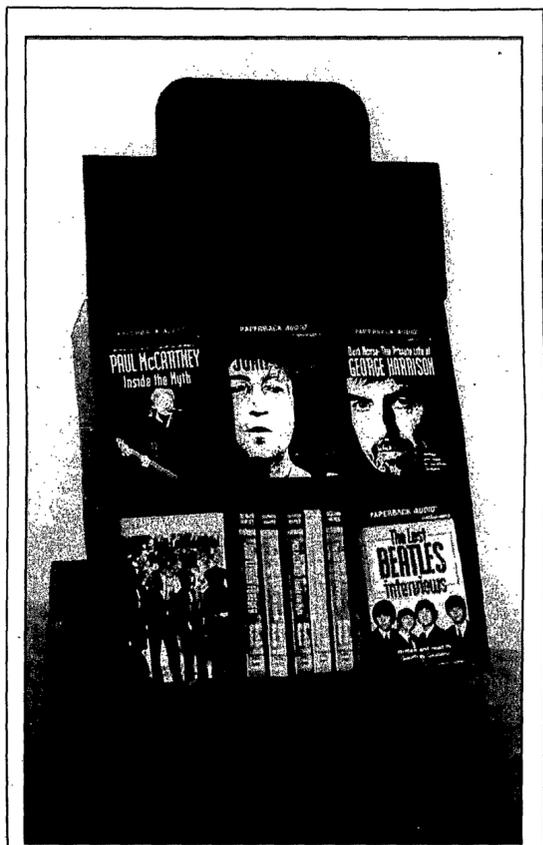
Girl dies in apartment fire

AMSTERDAM (AP) — An 8-year-old girl is dead following a fire at her apartment building Sunday morning.

Carla Martin was pronounced dead at Saint Mary's Hospital, city police said. She was found in a bedroom at the New Amsterdam Apartments at about 8 a.m.

There were no other injuries

reported. Officials said the fire started in the same upstairs bedroom. Police have not determined what caused the blaze, but said the investigation is continuing.



AP Photo

BOOKSTORE BEATLEMANIA: This display is just one of the many that dot bookstores across the country as the wave of Beatlemania sweeps through the United States 31 years after the first British invasion. ABC Television began a series Sunday that chronicles the rise of one of the most popular bands in the world and its end, which came in 1970.

NEW YORK ROUNDUP

Lotto jackpot grows to \$6 million Wednesday

SCHENECTADY (AP) — The Lotto Jackpot will be \$6 million Wednesday because there were no first prize tickets sold for the last drawing.

The winning numbers Saturday were: 3, 6, 23, 25, 42, 50 and supplementary number 51.

There were 125 second prize tickets with five matching numbers. They were worth \$1,946.50 each. There were 8,202 third prize tickets worth \$75.50 each with four matching numbers.

For fourth prize, 7,376 tickets paid \$32.50 each for matching three and the supplementary number.

Man, 41, killed in hunting accident

THURMAN (AP) — A 41-year-old hunter died Sunday when his companions mistook him for an injured deer and shot him, police said.

The Warren County Sheriff's Department said Mark E. Kuklinski, of Thurman, was hunting with a group of men at about 9 a.m. Sunday. The group apparently shot an injured deer, and moved in to track it, deputies said.

Richard Needham, 55, also of Thurman, is believed to have shot Kuklinski, who was wounded in the head. Kuklinski was taken to Glens Falls Hospital, where he was pronounced dead on arrival.

Police continued the investigation Sunday, and are expected to meet with the office of the Warren County District Attorney on Monday to determine whether criminal charges will be filed.

Bronx woman dies after stabbing, boyfriend charged

NEW YORK (AP) — A Bronx woman died early Sunday after suffering multiple stab wounds, allegedly at the hands of her boyfriend, police said.

Yvette Young, 38, was stabbed during a dispute in her apartment at about 7:55 p.m. Saturday, according to Officer Sarah Carpenter, a department spokeswoman.

Young was taken to Jacoby Hospital, where she was pronounced dead shortly after midnight, Carpenter said.

The suspect, Caleb Hymen, 32, of Brooklyn, fled after the stabbing but returned to the apartment while police were still at the scene investigating. He was arrested and charged with second-degree murder, manslaughter and criminal possession of a weapon, Carpenter said.

Several knives were confiscated at the apartment, police said.

For the record

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