

Universal Technical Institute and IGNITE Worldwide Host Virtual Conference to Inspire Girls to Pursue STEM Careers

Panel of successful women encourages students to broaden their education, apply for tuition grants

PHOENIX and MOUNTLAKE TERRACE, Wash., April 5, 2022 /PRNewswire/ -- [Universal Technical Institute](#) (UTI) and [IGNITE Worldwide](#) recently brought together high schools in nine states from across the country together for a virtual panel featuring a group of incredible women working in the automotive and motorsports industries. As part of UTI's effort to diversify the workforce and increase recruitment into the skilled trades, it has also been hosting in-person events for high school girls at its network of campuses, and offering \$100,000 in tuition grants.

During the virtual panel, students heard from moderator Kristin Labonte, president of Breaking Limits, panelist Sophie Fox, CEO of Women & Wheels, Madison Conrad, vice president and engine builder at Roush Yates Engines, Jennifer LaFever, vice president at Roush Yates Engines, and Brooke Ulrich, regional facilities and equipment service manager for Home Depot. The women talked about their education and career paths, the future of women in STEM and some of their challenges along the way.

"When I was in high school, I applied for an automotive technician program. And my family discouraged me because they said it wasn't for women," said Fox. "But if you have that passion, that spark, go for it. In 51 weeks (at UTI), you will have taken that first step to fulfilling your dreams."

"Women and non-binary people are on such an accelerated track for growth in traditionally male-dominated careers and industries," said Ulrich. "We are closing the gap. In STEM industries, women are now being welcomed, invited and promoted, instead of just tolerated. We're finally at a place where we're beginning to understand what women can contribute and the future looks better than ever."

Currently, workforce demand in the transportation sector is significant nationwide, with the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) estimating there are approximately 84,000 new openings each year for automotive, diesel, and collision repair technicians¹.

"We know that a diverse workforce benefits employers, employees and the economy, and we're constantly working to diversify our student body in order to meet the demand for skilled workers," said Universal Technical Institute CEO Jerome Grant. "Through alliances with organizations like IGNITE Worldwide, we're able to raise awareness about the career opportunities available to our graduates, and offer tuition grants to further help girls and women pursue a rewarding, lifelong career in the transportation industry."

Grant eligibility is extended to any female or female-identifying student who attends an onsite or virtual IGNITE Worldwide event. Tuition grants can be used toward UTI programs at any of their 12 campuses located across Arizona, California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Texas, and are offered at the following levels: a \$25,000 grant; a \$15,000 grant; a \$10,000 grant; and 22 \$2,000 grants. The [application](#) deadline is April 29, 2022.

"IGNITE Worldwide has been working to achieve gender and racial equity in STEM for more than 20 years," said IGNITE Worldwide CEO and Founder Cathi Rodgveller. "Currently, women represent [just over 1 in 4 STEM workers](#), but we strongly believe all girls deserve equal access to STEM education. By bringing girls together virtually and in-person, we're promoting economic equality and workforce development, and connecting IGNITE students with role models who live and work in their communities."

About Universal Technical Institute, Inc.

Founded in 1965 and headquartered in Phoenix, Universal Technical Institute's (NYSE: UTI) mission is to serve our students, partners, and communities by providing quality education and support services for in-demand careers. Approximately 250,000 students have graduated from one of UTI's 14 campuses located across Arizona, California, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Texas. UTI's campuses are accredited by the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC), while its employer-aligned technical training programs are offered under four brands: Universal Technical Institute, Motorcycle Mechanics Institute / Marine Mechanics Institute, NASCAR Technical Institute, and MIAT College of Technology. For more information and a complete list of all programs offered, please visit www.uti.edu or follow on LinkedIn @UniversalTechnicalInstitute and on Twitter @news_UTI.

About IGNITE Worldwide

For over 20 years IGNITE Worldwide provides a sustainable, scalable, and effective program that directly connects educators and their students to STEM professionals, to create memorable and life-changing experiences through program events including field trips, workshops, and panel presentations. Program offerings, both virtual and in-person, are available nationwide to schools, educators, and their students at zero cost. IGNITE Worldwide also engages with academic institutions at an international level.

The IGNITE Worldwide Program works to directly address the gender and racial disparity experienced in STEM fields. By reaching the students at a young age, during the school day, IGNITE encourages participating students to explore non-traditional STEM opportunities at their school, after graduation, and beyond.

For more information on opening an IGNITE Chapter at your school, please visit www.igniteworldwide.org or email us directly at contactus@ignite-worldwide.org. Follow IGNITE Worldwide on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

¹ Job openings include openings due to net employment changes and net replacements. See Table 1.10 Occupational separations and openings, projected 2020–30 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, www.bls.gov, viewed March 9, 2022.

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