

ACC Course Staffs AE

Heriberto Gonzalez didn't speak English and was working as a janitor. Quentin Langham was working at an auto shop changing oil and tires. Jeff Sanderson worked making sandwiches.

Now they are all employed full-time with Austin Energy in career-focused jobs because of a unique partnership between AE, Austin Community College (ACC) and Capital IDEA that is helping train the next generation of utility workers.

These success stories are just some of many that AE plans



ACC Power Technology Graduates, from left; Quentin Langham, Meter Technician I; Jeff Sanderson, Engineering Technician B; and Heriberto Gonzalez, Operations & Maintenance Specialist

to see in the future as it helps train new workers to fill critical roles in a workforce that has 30 percent of its employees eligible to retire in the next five years.

AE worked with ACC to establish a Power Technology degree in 2006. Since its inception, the program has been full each spring and fall semester with about 30 students per year. Last year, the school added a renew-

able energy program that started with seven students and has grown to 134 in three semesters as students look for well-paying jobs in the utility field or the clean energy industry.

According to AE Chief Administrative Officer Pat Alba, who helps develop the course curriculum, ACC is one of only a few community colleges in the country offering these types of

programs with utilities.

Heriberto, who now maintains critical power equipment at the Combined Transportation Emergency & Communications Center, sums it all up by saying, "These are great programs for people who want to succeed and have a better life, but it's not easy. No one else is going to take the classes for you. You have to want to work hard and to get ahead."