

**Written Testimony of James Coakley  
President of Nashville Auto-Diesel College, Nashville, TN  
Before the House Committee on Education and the Workforce**

**April 21, 2011 Hearing:  
“Reviving Our Economy: The Role of Higher Education in Job Growth and Development”  
Columbia, TN**

Mr. Chairman, my name is Jim Coakley and I am president of Nashville-Auto Diesel College located in Nashville, TN. I would like to thank you and Congressman DesJarlais for allowing me to testify on behalf of the students, faculty and staff of Nashville Auto-Diesel College on the role of higher education in job growth and development. I believe NADC, as well as other private career colleges in Tennessee and throughout the United States, play a vital role in today's economy and I will provide you with information on the strengths of our college that help produce well-trained graduates that are prepared to enter the workforce and provide an immediate impact on the businesses and communities where they are employed.

Nashville Auto-Diesel College has trained and educated technicians to repair multiple types of motor vehicles used in the transportation industry since 1919. The school was founded by H.O. Balls in 1919 and owned by the same family until 2003 when it was purchased by Lincoln Educational Services Corporation. Lincoln also has a long, storied history in training automotive technicians as it opened its first campus in 1946 in Newark, New Jersey, and has grown to 45 campuses in 17 states educating approximately 30,000 students as of December 31, 2010, in multiple disciplines and employing over 4,000 staff and faculty members.

Since opening in 1919, NADC has trained over 53,000 technicians that have worked in, or are currently employed, in every segment of the transportation repair industry. Students who enrolled in NADC during its infancy literally had to be taught how to drive an automobile on our property before they were able to train on how to repair the automobile. Now, almost 100 years later, our campus spans almost 300,000 square feet in 21 buildings spread over 19 acres to support our 1,500 students and 269 staff and faculty where short-term, NATEF-certified programs are offered in automotive and diesel technology and collision repair and refinishing. Upon completion of this basic training, students also have the option to continue in specialties such as high performance, heavy equipment maintenance, and undercar specialty or work towards an associate's degree through our online learning delivery system.

While technology in the automotive field has changed significantly over the past century, our mission has essentially remained consistent: offer the best educational training programs to enable graduates to take the highest level of job knowledge and skills to the marketplace. This mission is met by a dedicated group of faculty and staff that has enabled NADC to become a leader in the automotive field not only in Tennessee, but nationwide, with students coming from over 30 different states to the Nashville area to learn this important trade.

In order to continue being a leader in the automotive training field, our college relies on some basic guiding principles that assist us in meeting our published mission. First, our faculty and training facilities remain at the core of our educational process. For example, in order to be hired as an instructor, one must have workforce experience prior to even being considered for faculty appointment. Students coming to NADC want hands-on training during their enrollment and thus our faculty need to be able to lead those students in a laboratory learning environment. Without having years of experience in the field, there would be no way for our students to gain

the knowledge needed to transition into the workforce. It should also be noted these 77 ASE-certified faculty show their commitment through their certifications and longevity at the college. That being said, I am proud to tell you that over 69 percent of these instructors have worked at NADC for more than 5 years.

Our educational facilities are also a source of pride at our college and help with preparing our students for an immediate impact upon hiring. As mentioned earlier, our students really demand a tremendous amount of hands on learning and often are at their best when allowed to physically work on an automobile, component or system. In order to meet their demands, NADC invests a tremendous amount on acquiring and maintaining our inventory of vehicles and components. These training aids that we have valued at over \$5 million include over 40 late-model automobiles, 25 Class 8 trucks, 60 live car engines, 60 live truck engines, and over 150 training aids for component systems.

Many of the reasons why we have such wonderful training aids comes from the knowledge brought to us not only by the faculty, but also by our current advisory board members. At NADC, we have two separate advisory committees with over 45 persons from a diverse set of employers not only from Tennessee, but from states such as California, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania. These advisory boards meet at least twice per year to discuss our curriculum, facilities, equipment and outcomes of the program. By instituting a process by which the advisory board reviews this type of information and data, and actually meets at our campus, the college has the best possible perspective knowing that we are providing students with current and relevant instruction in the automotive, truck and collision repair fields.

The process by which we hire, develop curriculum and expose our students to the highest quality learning aids all ties into our ultimate goal of assisting our graduates in finding employment. The placement process, however, does not start at graduation for our students, but rather from their first days of orientation with the college where we bring in our career services department staff to discuss employment opportunities and the expectation of employers. From there the career services department provides assistance with resume writing, interviewing techniques, part-time employment assistance during their enrollment, hosting two large "Career Days" where dozens of employers attend, and then ultimately establishing job opportunities by scheduling interviews with employers that NADC has long-standing relationships, such as U.S. Caterpillar Dealers, from our 90 years in existence.

The dedication by our career services department has produced excellent results in getting our students into the workforce no matter whether it is in Tennessee or elsewhere in the United States. As a result of their commitment, over 75% of our 2010 graduates have already initiated their careers in the diesel, automotive or collision repair industries. Further, 71 of the students who graduated in 2010 and originally came from out-of-state ultimately stayed right here in Tennessee when our college found them employment in their field.

In addition to providing quality training to students that attend our college, I would also like to point out that NADC plays a role in the transportation sector. Currently, NADC is a national training center for the National Alternative Fuel Training Consortium based at the University of West Virginia in Morgantown, WV. Curriculum developed by the Consortium is used in a train-the-trainer fashion to prepare instructors to train students and the local community on clean fuels. Further, on October 15, 2010, NADC hosted Odyssey 2010, a celebration of clean fuel and energy independence. This successful event included speeches on the impact that technology vehicles and clean fuels will have on transportation in the United States by local and state officials as well as business leaders from the major automotive companies.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, as you know, our sector of higher education has a tremendous amount of regulatory oversight of which provides a student with the sense that our college meets a certain threshold for quality. Currently, our college is not only regulated by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, but also our national accreditor, the Accrediting Commission of Career Colleges and Schools, and the U.S. Department of Education as our college is able to participate in the federal government's student aid programs. While we are proud of the college's academic, employment, and fiscal outcomes, including the fact NADC has consistently published a cohort default rate below 10% for the last 10 years, I would be remiss by not letting this Committee know that some of the program integrity issues finalized in regulatory language by the U.S. Department of Education will have a negative impact on our college and thus indirectly on the economy of the Nashville metropolitan region at a time when our nation's automotive industry seems to be regaining its footing.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman and Congressman DesJarlais, I hope this written testimony provides you with a perspective as to the role NADC plays in job growth and filling a niche for those students who want to learn a skilled trade from one of the oldest and most distinguished colleges in this field. I appreciate the opportunity to testify today and I look forward to providing any answers to your questions not only today, but any time in the future.