Spotlight on HOUSTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE

RSES was founded on the principles of education and training. With webinars, seminars, publications and other opportunities for continuing education credits, RSES always has an eye on the future of HVACR industry. Our Head of the Class column keeps the spotlight on HVACR tech schools in North America, promotes education, and encourages students young and old to pursue a career in the HVACR profession.

This month we feature Houston Community College (HCC), in Houston, TX. The college was established in 1971 as a single school and then restructured in 1992 as a multi-college system. As the Houston area attracts more Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM)-based corporations, there is an increased need for a well-trained STEM workforce.

The entrance to the HCC Southeast College.

With dozens of Houston expansion projects in progress—including the Ship Channel, Port of Houston, Houston Airport System and school districts—along with a large number of retirements, more than 3,300 annual job openings in construction are projected in the region. The Construction Center of Excellence offers certificates, competency-based training and associate degree programs to support the growing need for electricians, HVAC technicians, welders, industrial automation, pipefitting, stationary engineers and general construction skills. The Center provides training that follows relevant industry skills standards and credentialing and supports customized training and partnership with regional employer organizations engaged in workforce development.

RSES Journal talked with Kris Asper, Dean of HCC's Center of Excellence Construction/HVAC to learn more.

RSES Journal: What makes HCC different from other tech schools?

Kris Asper: We are in development of a state-of-the-art HVAC training facility using Hampden Engineering Corporation trainers. Our Associate of Applied Science program is focused on Smart Building Technology and will utilize current communication and energy management needs of the HVAC industry.

> **According to the US Department of Labor, the number of sophisticated climate-control systems is expected to increase demand for qualified HVACR technicians.**

RJ: Does your college provide any assistance or training needs after graduation?

KA: Currently no added assistance is offered.

RJ: What value do you see in RSES certification?

KA: RSES' mission is to "provide opportunities for enhanced technical competence by offering comprehensive, cutting-edge education and certification to our members and the HVACR industry," according to its mission statement. With that in mind, HCC's mission is very similar: "What sets HCC apart is its faculty, individuals who bring theory and practice to life in the classroom. HCC's faculty, many of whom hold doctorates, teach in the classroom and are accomplished academicians, as well as successful in their respective professional fields. With more than 3,600 professors who have a passion for teaching, HCC students benefit from a wealth of real world experience that the faculty brings to the classroom."

RJ: Tell us more about your program?

Hampden air conditioning system used in the classroom.

KA: Our program is aligned with industry and employment forecasts. Our AAS degree has a strong focus on building automation and controls.

- →Demonstrate knowledge of safety rules and regulations;
- →Demonstrate the proper selection, use and maintenance of hand and power tools;
- →Tools and measuring instruments used in HVACR;
- →Demonstrate knowledge of HVACR controls;
- →Maintain/service/repair HVACR equipment; and
- →Troubleshoot HVACR equipment.

RJ: What can be done to attract more students to the HVACR industry and close the HVACR skills gap?

KA: According to the US Department of Labor, the number of sophisticated climate-control systems is expected to increase demand for qualified HVACR technicians. Candidates familiar with computers and electronics, as well as those who have developed troubleshooting skills, will have the best job opportunities.

There are 6,819 heating and A/C mechanics and installers employed in the Greater Houston Area. This number is expected to increase by 8.2% over the next four years.

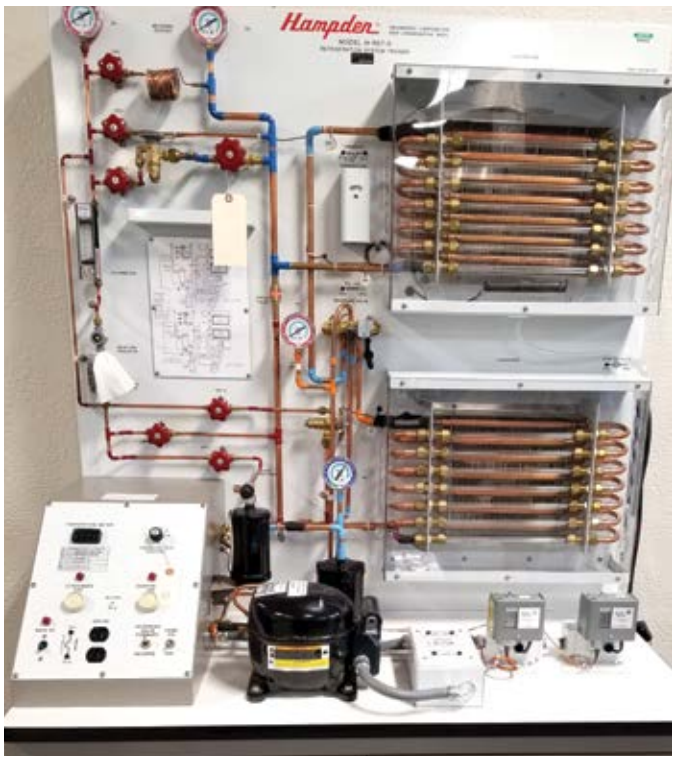
RJ: What else should we know about your program?

KA: The program is designed to train individuals in the field of air conditioning, heating and refrigeration equipment, maintenance and repair and in the use of EPA-approved recovery equipment. Individuals satisfying course competencies have career opportunities in a variety of job classifications such as service and repair of residential and commercial air conditioning and refrigeration systems. All seeking employment as air conditioning/refrigeration technicians must pass an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) certification test. HCC recommends students pass this test before completing the program.

RJ: How was your school affected by Hurricane Harvey?

KA: The devastation and loss will be with us for some time. We are still affected by the calamity of Harvey and the rebuilding process is going strong. We are very hopeful of a successful and prosperous future at HCC.

The affect to our HVAC program was intermittent but classes started without too much consequence and things look bright. Our student capacity actually increased this semester so we are happy for that.



Hampden refrigeration system trainer used at HCC.