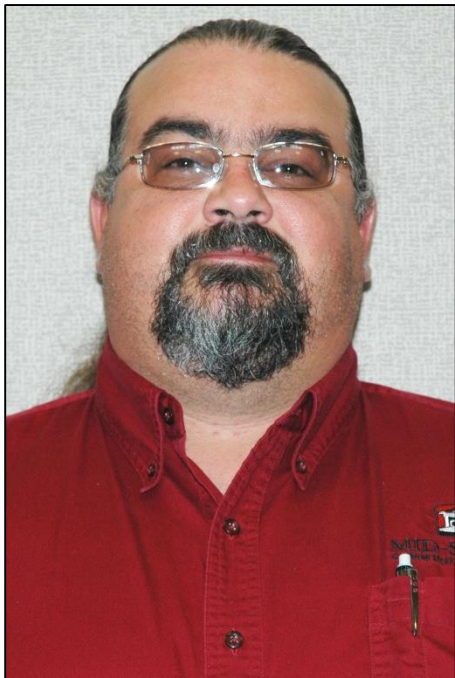


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ASU Mid-South Mechatronics Instructor Enjoys His Work

For as long as he can remember, John Judd, Lead Instructor for Arkansas State University Mid-South's Mechatronics program, has enjoyed building, trouble shooting, and maintaining equipment. He's now using his considerable experience to help students interested in pursuing a career in the diverse and lucrative industrial maintenance profession.



"I enjoy helping these guys gain skills that will allow them to find a job and do something better than they're doing now or doing something they didn't know they might want to do," Judd said.

He credits his grandfather with nurturing his mechanical aptitude.

"He guided me in that direction," Judd explained. "He had always been doing some sort of manufacturing on his own, building this and that and selling what he built. I actually helped him build some machines when I was in junior high and high school, and I really enjoyed doing that."

In high school, Judd gravitated toward vocational-technical education and put most of his efforts into learning about electricity and electrical systems. When he graduated, he tried to land an industrial maintenance job, but a lack of documented work experience hindered his efforts.

Judd ended up as a factory worker for about four years while continuing to pursue industrial maintenance opportunities.

"I finally found a place that was hiring (in Jonesboro). They were looking for bodies pretty much; they were desperate for help. Since I had some electrical background, they hired me. I worked there for about four years and got some experience."

He then returned to his first employer, this time as a technician instead of a floor worker, and spent the better part of 16 years there.

“I’ve done everything from heavy metal fabrication and welding in the industrial maintenance world all the way to micro controls and computer systems,” Judd said. “The place I worked had fairly diverse machinery because of their unique process, so they had a lot of different aspects of mechanical and electrical maintenance needs.”

“I did a lot of problem solving, and it was a neat job for me. The last five or six years there I did quite a bit of machining retrofitting, upgrading, and redesign. I was given free rein to make things better. I had the opportunity to design and build my own machinery. It was a lot of fun.”

When Arkansas State University-Newport needed a temporary instructor, the school approached Judd.

“I got talked into filling in for an adjunct instructor,” he said, noting that he worked primarily with incumbent workers. “It was neat talking with mechanics and helping them work out the real-life problems they were having on the job. It was rewarding when they came in and said, ‘You know what we talked about in class the other day? We had to do that at work.’ That was really neat.”

College officials took note of Judd’s skills and rapport with students and encouraged him to go to school and become a full-time teacher. Judd heeded the suggestion, earned his associate degree, and moved to the front of the line for a full-time position at ASUN. When an opportunity arose at Mid-South Community College, however, he accepted it.

“It was definitely a daunting task when I arrived,” Judd recalled. “I didn’t realize I would have to walk in, build a curriculum, and start teaching in such a short period of time. But with help from everybody at the college, it worked out well.”

Judd said the country is facing a major manufacturing challenge because of a lack of skilled technicians entering the workforce. He said the ASU Mid-South program is designed to assist in alleviating the shortfall.

“We’re in a big manufacturing crisis right now because we’ve outpaced ourselves in terms of the employees we’re putting into the workforce versus the ones who are leaving. That’s a big problem, but I feel like we’re doing our part to help solve it.”

For more information about Mechatronics at ASU Mid-South, visit the college at 2000 West Broadway in West Memphis, call the Admissions Office at (870) 733-6728, see the website at www.asumidsouth.edu, or email admissions@midsouthcc.edu.