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On The Road To A New Career | FTCC's CDL Driver Training Program

Logistics is one of the fastest growing sectors in the country, with transportation volume estimated to steadily rise 2.2 percent for the next five years. ([American Trucking Associations](#)). Employers are seeking 50,000 truck drivers to keep up with the increasing demand. By 2026, over 175,000 of these roles are expected to remain unfulfilled.

Our community's central location on Interstate-95, infrastructure, and proximity to shipping ports make it a major transportation hub. More than 220 new jobs requiring a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) have been posted in Cumberland County in the last 100 days. To prepare more drivers for successful careers, Fayetteville Technical Community College has expanded its CDL course at one of the lowest tuition rates in the United States.

Launched in 2018, FTCC's open-enrollment program recently purchased two more 18-wheelers, enabling it to train twelve students at a time. For the low cost of \$525, the course includes tuition, a drug screening, CDL Class A licensure, and other necessary permits. Graduates are free agents able to be hired by any transportation company.

Freight carriers recruiting from the program offer starting salaries of \$45,000 to \$52,000 a year with many including tuition reimbursement. Twelve students are graduating this week, bringing the total to twenty-nine since June. Nearly all have been hired or are in negotiations with employers.

During the ten-week course, participants learn how to effectively conduct pre-trip and post-trip inspections, plan routes, and perform complex driving maneuvers. The 360 hours they spend behind-the wheel are more than double the minimum required by the state and most other programs. According to Lead Instructor Eric Smith, "This is one of the reasons why businesses are beating down our door to recruit these

students. The more time you have in a big rig, the more proficient you are at shifting, turns, and backing up. Graduates are polished by the time they complete our class, so companies can immediately begin training them on their policies instead of skills they should have already learned in school."

Tidewater Transit Co., an industry leader in liquid and dry bulk transportation, is considering hiring three more graduates in addition to the five already working at its terminal. John Hart, Tidewater's Fayetteville Terminal Manager, praised the benefits of FTCC's ten-week program. "The instructors take time to fully impart safe habits in their students. This is a huge advantage for employers who can typically get one of these drivers on the road in half the time as someone from a shorter course."



Instructor Joe Devenero gives a driving pointer to Sandra Aguiluz



FCEDC staff with students from FTCC's 3rd open-enrollment CDL class

Students are taught solely on manual vehicles, keeping their licenses free from restrictions. “Many companies won’t hire a driver with an ‘automatic restriction’ because it makes them a liability,” said Smith. “If a rig breaks down, they can’t guarantee that a rental will not be a manual.”

FTCC offers day programs starting every eleven weeks and night courses beginning in January and July. Individuals interested in enrolling must be 18 years old; have a valid driver’s license; must pass a DOT physical, drug screen, and background history check; and obtain a CDL class “A” permit. For more information, visit <https://www.faytechcc.edu/corporate-continuing-education/corporate-industry-training/> or call (910) 678-8432.