

## Hill College

*Trane NC3 training lab provides hands-on learning; develops qualified workforce; improves student marketability; aids recruitment • Cleburne, TX*

*Chartered under the name of Hillsboro Junior College, Hill College was the first junior college in the state of Texas, enrolling its first students in 1923. Today, the college provides high quality comprehensive educational programs and services to enhance the educational, cultural, and economic development of students and the community. The college's Cleburne extension includes six buildings and has more than 1,000 students enrolled in day and night classes.*

### Challenge

While attending a National Coalition of Certification Centers (NC3) meeting in Kenosha, WI, to discuss its automotive program, Hill College administrators learned about Trane's partnership with the organization and the company's desire to support the HVAC industry by helping to develop a qualified workforce. With a growing need for trained and certified technicians in Texas, Hill College sought to add a new HVAC program to its educational offerings, complete with a state-of-the-art residential and commercial HVAC equipment and controls training lab. "Texas is hot. We need air-conditioning and good HVAC technicians," said Rex Parcels, vice president of instruction, Hill College. "Our Board wanted to help our students become more marketable. We saw what some of our peer schools were doing and knew that was the direction we should go in."

### Solution

As an exclusive industry sponsor and advisor of the National Coalition of Certification Centers (NC3), a network of education providers and corporations that validate new and emerging technology skills to advance workforce development, Trane is committed to bridging the skills gap in the HVAC industry. Because of Trane's NC3 partnership, industry knowledge, and ability to develop a turnkey training lab solution, the college began discussions with the company regarding its new facility.



*Hill College refurbished an old, historic building for its new HVAC equipment and controls training lab, helping to revitalize the downtown Cleburne area.*

Hill College purchased a historical building in downtown Cleburne to repurpose for the lab. As work began to refurbish the building, a drop in enrollment threatened to halt the project. When the Board of Regents was presented the labor market data indicating the need for a highly trained workforce for high paying, in-demand careers, they were convinced and the project moved forward. A Trane energy savings performance contract allowed the college to use guaranteed energy savings to help fund development of the new HVAC training lab, as well as energy efficiency improvements on both of its campuses.

## Implementing a complete turnkey project

Trane and NC3 worked with Hill College every step of the way during implementation and start-up of the lab. Trane representatives participated on the school's HVAC advisory council, joined in visits to existing labs for benchmarking, interviewed potential instructors, and provided workshops for the Texas Board of Regents. Guiding the school's advisory board, Trane helped develop a curriculum, which was scrutinized by state, region and school boards before receiving approval for implementation.

## Creating a hands-on, real-life experience

Aligning with the HVAC program curriculum, Trane selected HVAC equipment and controls for the training lab that would provide a hands-on experience for students, as close to real life as possible. The Hill College lab consists of everything the students need to be well trained in various aspects of HVAC, both commercial and residential. This includes an integrated commercial controls and equipment system that is representative of a variety of building types, and a unique learning wall behind the residential units that expands and enhances the training. Classroom fixtures, such as white boards and desks, were also included.

## Results

Working in collaboration, Hill College, Trane and NC3 initiated an HVAC program to bridge the industry skills gap and develop a qualified technical workforce. The program's curriculum covers residential and commercial HVAC equipment and controls, and is enhanced with hands-on learning in a newly constructed state-of-the-art training lab. The lab provides students with an optimal learning environment to gain the



*The Hill College lab consists of everything students need to be well trained in various aspects of commercial and residential HVAC.*

skills needed to advance their careers in the competitive workplace and earn industry recognized certifications to improve their marketability. Located in a refurbished historical building, the lab is helping to revitalize the area and is also instrumental in recruiting new students. Since launching the lab, Hill College has seen enrollment and revenue steadily increasing. "It's been a great partnership with Trane," said Parcels. "The HVAC program and training lab open up opportunities for the college and our students. We are considering using the lab for continuing education classes. Plus, more four-year colleges are now allowing technical certifications to be applied to their bachelor's degree programs. A technical certification, plus a bachelor's degree, opens up even more opportunities."

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