



SCHOOLS - STUDENTS - EMPLOYERS



BUILDING BRIDGES

As part of CAPPS' *Building Bridges* Initiative, we're sharing member success stories. That's what *Building Bridges* is about after all, connecting with each other: member schools, students and the employers who depend upon California's private postsecondary institutions. We all have so much to offer the state's economy and well-being --and we want everyone to know about it!

UTI PAVES THE WAY FOR A CAREER IN NASCAR

On February 21, 2010 the Auto Club Speedway in Fontana, CA will play host to the 2010 West Coast premier of NASCAR at the Auto Club 500. An alumnus of CAPPS member school Universal Technical Institute (UTI) will have played a key role in the success of one team on Race Day.



UTI is a long-standing member of CAPPS and a nationwide provider of technical education training for students seeking careers as professional automotive, diesel, collision repair, motorcycle and marine technicians. UTI has a strong California presence with campuses in Rancho Cucamonga and Sacramento, providing professional automotive training to thousands of students.

UTI teamed up with NASCAR to open the first NASCAR Technical Institute (NTI) in Race City, USA (Mooresville, NC). UTI shared with CAPPS the story of Carlos Plaza, a student who began at the UTI Ranch Cucamonga campus, and continued on to NTI. CAPPS caught up with Carlos a few days before the Auto Club 500 race.



CARLOS PLAZA
Final Assembly Mechanic, Penske Racing
UTI Graduate 2005, NTI Graduate 2006

When Carlos Plaza was in fourth grade his youngest brother gave him a Terry Labonte model toy. From then on, Carlos knew what he wanted to be when he grew up.

Carlos began his automotive training at the Rancho Cucamonga campus of UTI. According to UTI, he was a “standout student”. After graduating from UTI, Carlos enrolled at NTI. He moved to North Carolina six weeks before he was to start classes, and found a place to live with the help of the school’s Student Support Services. To help pay for his expenses, and so that his parents wouldn’t have to foot the bill for school themselves, Carlos started working at a local Target store. “I worked for Target after school. Pretty much went to school from 6:30 AM to 1:00 PM, then was at work by 2 and worked till 9,” he explains. At night, after arriving home from work, he studied, slept, and then started the process all over again the next day. “Pretty much work and school were my life,” he recalls.

While Carlos was at still taking classes at NTI, the school was asked to recommend a few of their students to some of the NASCAR teams. NTI included Carlos among the students whose resumes they sent to the teams, and he was one of the few to be selected and hired. Before graduation, Carlos began working for the Penske Racing Team as a rear suspension mechanic. He went on to graduate from NTI with a 4.0 GPA and is still with Penske Racing, installing fuel cell rads and engines in cars before they go to the track, and continuing to help out the suspension team.

Carlos remembers that one of the hardest things he faced while at NTI was being thousands of miles away from his family back in California. “I knew that I just could give up because I was homesick,” Carlos says, but he realized that he “just had to get over it” and “basically had to grow up.” Carlos counts his Engines 1 teacher as an important influence. His teacher told him if he really wanted to get into NASCAR he should talk with John Dodson, the NASCAR Teams Relations Director at NTI. “So I did and pretty much if I didn’t I probably wouldn’t be where I’m at now,” Carlos says. Although he still misses his family and friends on the West Coast, and

says that living in North Carolina is a lot different from living in Southern California, Carlos believes “it has all been for the good.”

Carlos offers these words of wisdom, “You only get as much as you put into it, and if you really want to work in NASCAR it’s going to be a lot of work, but don’t give up.”

And that Terry Labonte model toy? Carlos still has it.

Carlos Plaza’s dream of a career with NASCAR began as a little boy in SoCal – he eventually traveled a long way from California to achieve that dream, but before all of that he was a student at UTI in Rancho Cucamonga. UTI’s partnership with NASCAR gave Carlos the opportunity to attend the NASCAR Technical Institute and continue on to a successful career with the Penske Racing Team. CAPPS is proud to count UTI as a member and one of the many outstanding private postsecondary schools in California. For more information on UTI, please visit their website at www.uti.edu.

ABOUT CAPPS

The California Association of Private Postsecondary Schools (CAPPS) is the only California State Association representing the many diverse kinds of Private Postsecondary Schools in California. CAPPS has a membership of over three hundred institutions including for-profit, non-profit, religious exempt and registered. These schools and colleges are Nationally or Regionally accredited or approved-only. CAPPS mission is to ensure that the needs of the entire sector - from small registered “mom and pop” schools to large publicly traded institutions - are met from an educational, policy and business perspective. Since 1985 CAPPS has worked with California Governors, the State Legislature, other elected officials and numerous regulatory agencies that provide oversight to the sector. CAPPS offers strong member services in professional development as well as business and educational advice. For more information about CAPPS, please visit www.cappsonline.org.

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