

PROFILE OF A MAT² GRADUATE: LOGEN OKONIEWSKI



In high school, Logen Okoniewski knew he wanted to go into mechatronics, but he wasn't sure how to go about it.

"School is very expensive," said Logen. "I could go to school for four years and get a bunch of debt, but that didn't seem like a very good option for me. So I was looking around and thinking, "maybe I'll get a job and some experience and go to school at the same time."

One of his high school teachers recommended the Michigan Advanced Technician Apprenticeship Program (MAT²) as an accelerated way to earn a debt-free associate degree while gaining on-the-job experience with a company. Logen interviewed with different companies in the program and decided to pursue his interest in the automotive field at ZF.

"I thought the program was a lot of fun," said Logen. "I enjoyed how it's a broad area of subjects, so for eight weeks, we're learning about mechanical or electrical or even just safety. For me, it fit right into the way I like to learn, which is hands-on and quick. In my cohort, there were 10 of us, so we got to know the teachers really well. We could ask them questions or work with them after class."

"It's an advantage over a regular school program where you're just one of 50+ students and the teacher never gets to know you."

Logen is now a full-time service technician at ZF test system. He travels around the country to help different companies, mostly automotive, build systems from scratch that test their end-of-line products. He said that graduating without student loan debt and with a wealth of practical experience has been incredibly valuable for him and his family.

"Getting school paid for was a big draw," said Logen. "I'm 21, and I just bought a house. I have three siblings, and my parents had saved up a bit for each of our schooling, enough for a two-year degree. Since my schooling was paid for, my parents were able to help my older sister go and continue her schooling, so that's worked out really well for her. It's been an amazing blessing for the whole family."

Logen said he recommends MAT² for high school students who are interested in going into any technical field and want to gain experience.

"The accelerated classes were great, allowing me to work, earn money and gain experience while getting a degree at same time," he said. "In the workforce, once you have your degree, experience is the next big thing. I know a lot of people want to jump into engineering, but even if you do, I think you should do a program like this so you have experience in the field. A lot of the time you run into an engineer who has never actually manufactured something. There's a knowledge gap. This program gives you a huge advantage."

Interested in a MAT² Apprenticeship? Contact us at info@mat2apprenticeships.com