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Nearly 40 men and women will graduate this week from vocational-training certificate programs offered at the Utah State Prison by Davis Applied Technology College. For each graduate, the hard-earned certificate offers one of the surest ways to avoid a return to prison.

A 2012 University of Utah analysis found that recidivism is reduced 18 percent by secondary vocational education alone — and by 38 percent when an offender is able to get a job based on that education upon release to the community.

Eighteen women will receive certificates in either Culinary Arts or Business Technology on Wednesday.

Twenty-nine men will receive certificates on Thursday in one of the following programs: Welding; Business Technology; Automotive; Industrial Maintenance; and Culinary Arts.

Davis Applied Technology College has provided vocational training at the prison since 2010. In the past five years, including this year, 326 inmates have graduated from DATC after completing from 900 credit hours (Maintenance Technician) to 1380 credit hours (Business Technology). Many go on to complete additional training at the college once they're released.

Inmates participating in DATC's vocational programs must cover half the tuition (\$3,683 in FY2015)— either with their own funds and/or with low-interest student loans. The other half of the tuition is covered through a telephone fee paid by inmates and their families. To be eligible for enrollment, an inmate must already have graduated from high school or completed a GED program.

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