T-TEN Provides Path to Career for Graduates with Toyota, Lexus Service Teams

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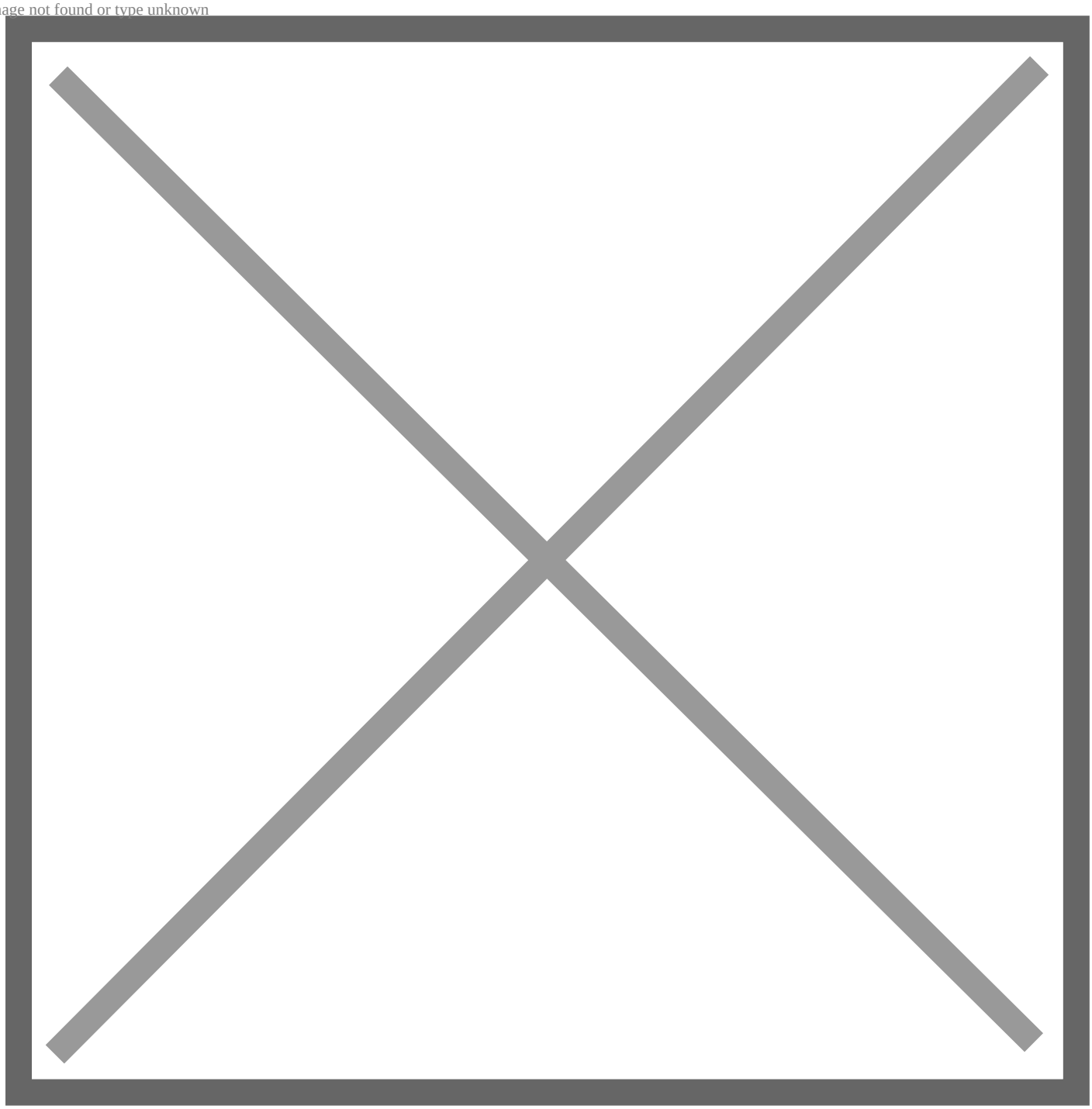


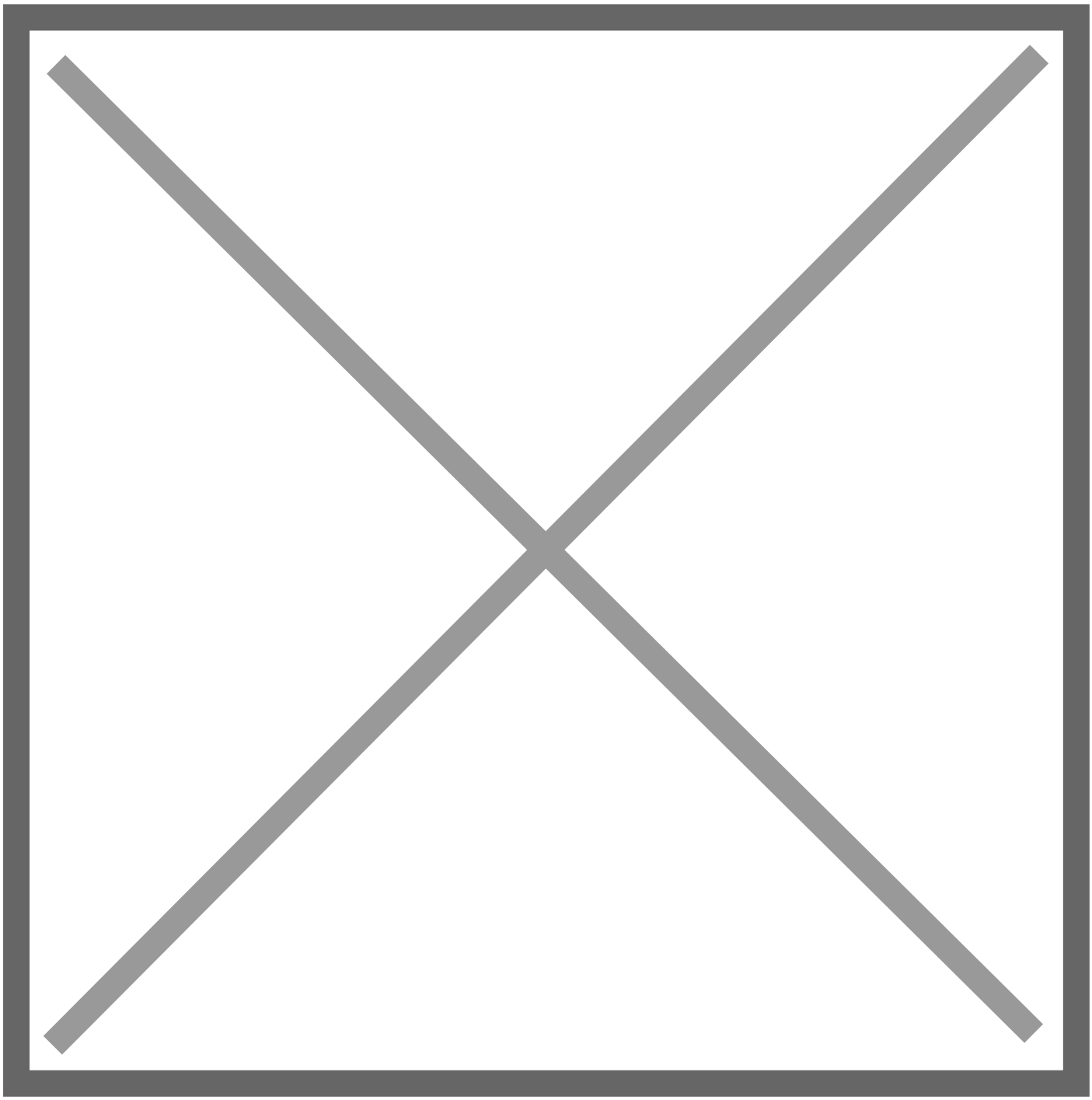
Toyota and its independent dealer network are always looking for the best talent to build and maintain vehicles once they're on the road. With more than 1,500 Toyota and Lexus dealerships in the U.S, the need for skilled technicians for the millions of Toyota and Lexus vehicles on the road is a crucial element to the ownership experience.

According to the National Automobile Dealers Association, about 76,000 new auto service technicians are needed each year to keep up with retirements and new job demands. But U.S. training programs are only producing about 39,000 graduates – a 37,000-worker gap.

Toyota's T-TEN program is working to fill those openings. T-TEN started in 1986 with a handful of locations. Today, 36 colleges across the nation provide T-TEN training, ensuring aspiring technicians receive comprehensive and practical education to be successful in their careers.

T-TEN students split their time between the school and a Toyota/Lexus dealership where they apprentice as a technician and gain valuable real-world experience. Participating colleges are provided with Toyota/Lexus vehicles, diagnostic equipment, curriculum, instructor training and marketing materials to ensure students receive the best education and training to become an automotive technician.

Chris Chartron, T-TEN Manager stated, "We are focused on providing our dealerships highly skilled technicians that can provide outstanding service and repair for our customers. We know dealerships have a shortage of technicians, and the T-TEN program provides a pipeline of qualified technicians for Toyota and Lexus."



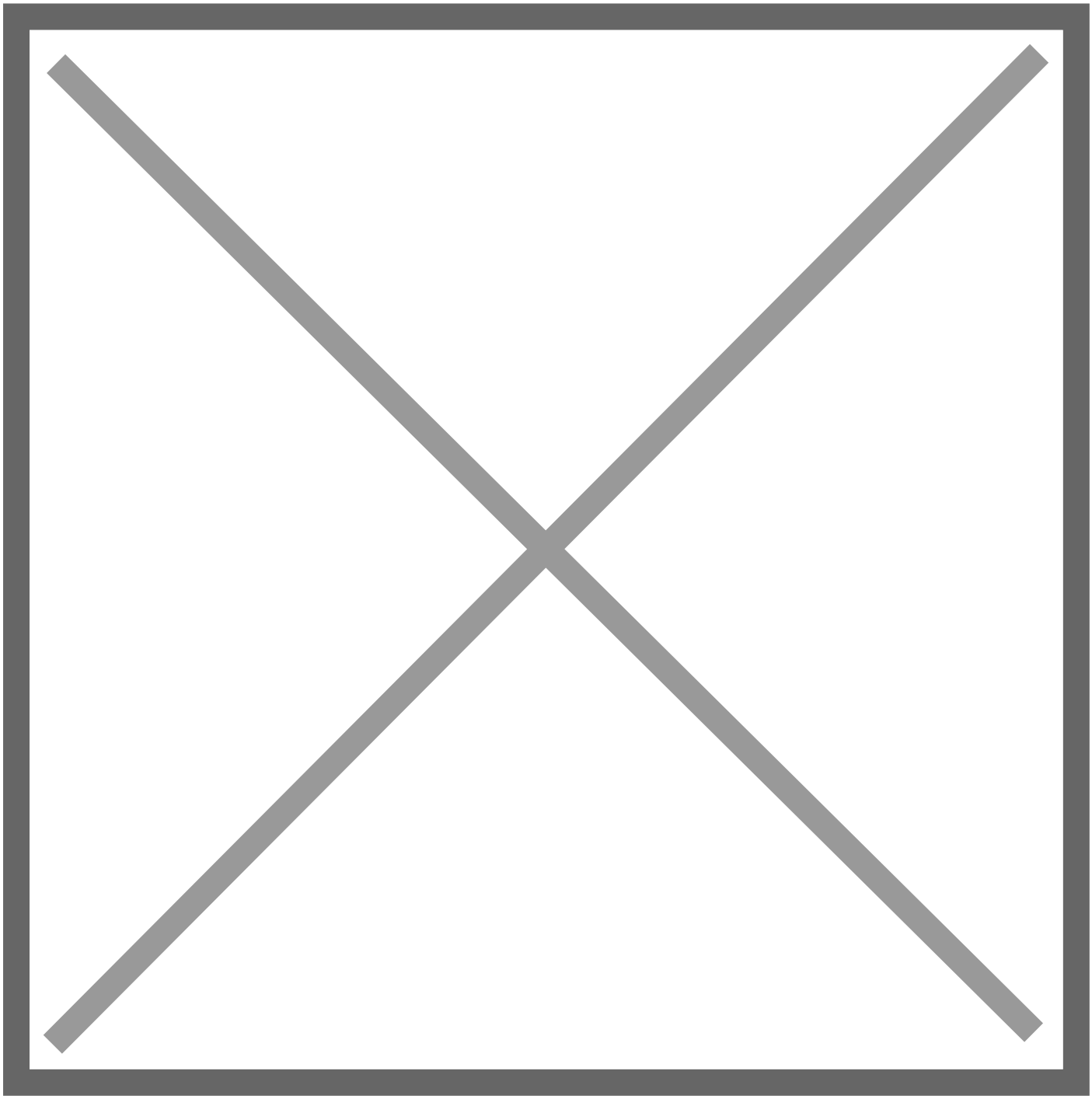
Technologies of the Future

T-TEN also provides specialized training for new technology, often seen at Toyota and Lexus dealerships, like hybrid- and battery-electric vehicles. That kind of training appealed to Cole Bergstrom, a recent graduate from Collin College in Allen, Texas. He liked the idea of working on one manufacturer's vehicles and getting to know them well.

While in college, Bergstrom learned safety precautions when working on hybrid-electric vehicles. For example, it's best to wear multiple pairs of gloves and have a second person on hand in case of electrical shock. Students

are also instructed in the proper way to disconnect high-voltage electrical systems.

More than half of the vehicles he works on now as a full-time automotive technician at Toyota of Plano are hybrids. “We were constantly working on Toyota hybrid vehicles,” Bergstrom said. “Dealerships really want you to have this training, and going through the T-TEN program helped me get the courses, training, and experience I needed to be successful as a technician.”



‘A Better Technician’
Another recent graduate, Matthew Coronado, said the program’s main draw was the opportunity to work at Toyota of Plano while still in school. The dealership permits students to work as many hours as they want, up to full-time. For Coronado, that meant paying off tuition.

The T-TEN credential, and working at the dealership for those extra hours, gave Coronado the feeling he was working toward a specific future. When he went full-time, he was a Toyota Expert Certified technician. Coronado liked the T-TEN program and the dealership enough to recruit five classmates to join Toyota of Plano.

“If I hadn’t gone through T-TEN, I would probably still be an apprentice,” Coronado said. “And, if I’m honest, I might have found something else to do. But because I went through the schooling, it put me on a path of being a better technician and being better at my job.”

Deno Principe, the service manager at Toyota of Plano, said the T-TEN program is the preferred way of getting technicians with the right training into the dealership. There are already 10 graduates working at the store. Many T-TEN graduates have the skills of a master mechanic years before other technicians of similar age.

“My general manager has said we shouldn’t turn anybody from the T-TEN program away,” Principe said. “We need more technicians, and this is the best way to build our own.”

For more information about the T-TEN Program, visit T-TEN.com.

Series Note:
This article is part of a series of feature articles about the various workforce development programs across Toyota Motor North America. These programs span STEM education programs from Pre-K to 12, high-school and post-secondary industry programs, scholarships, internships, and on-the-job training. To learn more about AMT, 4T Academy, T-TEN, Driving Possibilities, scholarships and internship programs, visit Community Engagement in the Toyota Newsroom.