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GCI quickly adjusting to pandemic challenges - by Joseph Camilo

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COVID-19 has been a public health and economic disaster, causing over 8,000 deaths in Massachusetts alone and resulting in unemployment rates not seen since the Great Depression. But at the Gould Construction Institute (GCI), reacting quickly to the challenges posed by the pandemic has quickened the pace of efforts to update GCI's offerings and make it more responsive to the needs of member companies and their employees who train with Gould.

When COVID-19 hit in March, GCI quickly transitioned to online classes to allow students to complete the necessary hours for the spring semester. To make the switch, we held orientations to train instructors on how to use Zoom.

With so many employees laid off or furloughed, GCI teamed with Penn Foster to offer construction-related courses to provide training to those employees and keep them engaged.

Most educational offerings will be delivered remotely when the school year begins this fall, and the Gould is no exception. To maximize the quality of our curriculum, we're using the summer to continue and enhance instructor training in online teaching.

Students tell us they want more hands-on training, and there too the Gould is responding. GCI uses the NCCER curriculum, but for years the lack of hands-on training prevented us from being part of the NCCER accreditation program. Beginning this fall, the Gould will pilot NCCER accreditation with our electrical program at three of the school's 11 locations. Electrical will join sheet metal and pipefitting as trades in which GCI provides hands-on training.

The Gould aims to become a one-stop shop for all your career, professional development and safety training needs. To ensure real-time feedback about those needs, ABC and Gould are introducing an Education & Training Subcommittee. We are already building an arsenal of new online courses with our own content that will become available later this summer. The first will be hot works safety training.

With every passing day, it becomes clearer that even after the pandemic finally recedes, the world we return to will have important differences from how things were just last February. For the Gould Construction Institute, serving the training needs of ABC member companies will require us to be nimble and flexible, to shape offerings based on regular member feedback and to offer various options for delivering content. We're working hard to achieve those goals.

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