

REFORMING EDUCATION



MAAPing the automotive future

Highly motivated students connect their academic pursuits with a unique car-driven enterprise **BY JANET SMITH ('81)**

A quick glance around the spacious room with its glossy gray floor, glass front and array of sports cars calls to mind a modern high-end automobile dealership. There's even a coffee bar. But don't let that floor free of oil drips fool you. You're in a specialized educational space where hands get dirty and business relationships are formed—Madison Automotive Apprentices. Established in Spring 2017, MAAP is a nonprofit affiliated with the College of Integrated Science and Engineering, but open to highly motivated JMU students from any academic major. It exists to provide educational and networking opportunities for students interested in automotive-related careers.

"We're a working laboratory," says Cole Scrogam ('90, '16M), executive director of MAAP. Scrogam began thinking about the venture more than three years ago. "We help students connect the dots when they go out into the world. The student is not 'just a kid out of school.'"

In MAAP's first year of operation, about 15 students engaged in educational institutes, internships and volunteer opportunities created as Scrogam and his son, Michael ('17), take on precision vehicle restoration projects for paying clients. They specialize in restoring Porsches, vintage Volkswagens and other classic automobiles for street and road-course driving and in consulting with car owners who need expertise on how to work on their own vehicles.

MAAP is unique in the United States, according to JMU history professor Kevin Borg, who, as faculty adviser to the student organization Madison Motorsports, has steered students to the nonprofit. MAAP offers students hands-on experience to complement their respective academic programs of study at JMU.



Cole Scrogam (right) diagnoses a car problem as MAAP apprentice Brandon Itkin watches and learns.



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Automotive programs at other colleges are generally vocational enterprises, he said.

“This is really a gift to JMU,” Borg says. “Cole’s willingness to share his expertise in automobile restoration and motor-sports team management gives our students the hands-on experience that is harder to come by as high-school curricula tend to separate vocational and college-bound students, resulting in no shop time for students heading to college. Plus, Cole knows how to teach.”

The Scrogghams and their apprentices are committed to offering precise mechanical work at the Harrisonburg shop, says Michael Scroggham, an alumnus of JMU’s engineering program. “We do research to get the details right.” In the world of classic car restoration, that attention to detail translates to authenticity that can increase the monetary value of a vehicle.

MAAP’s presence is valuable for “car people” who simply enjoy vehicles from earlier times, too. “Beyond the dollar value, many people really care about the car itself,” Michael Scroggham says. “They appreciate

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– KEVIN BORG, *JMU history professor*

the ownership of something special.”

Brandon Itkin, a junior majoring in marketing, plans to work with an auto manufacturing company, probably in advertising, after college. His work in rebuilding engines under the Scrogghams’ tutelage gives him the experience to talk knowledgeably with people who work with cars—dealers, mechanics and car lovers. “Car people respect you more when you know what a camshaft is,” he adds. “You’re not just a guy in a suit.”

Itkin was one of three MAAP apprentices who helped present cars in March at the Amelia Island Concours d’Elegance in Florida, an opportunity arranged by Cole Scroggham. Just as the exhibition drew a wide array of vehicles, Itkin found it also gathered people from all walks of life. “You

realize that not everyone wears a racing helmet or an Italian suit,” he says. “Some people just like cars. They find them an art form, a hobby or just need something to get to work every day, and they just like the way they look when they drive there.”

“I wouldn’t have had that hands-on experience without MAAP,” Itkin says of his Amelia Island work. “The involvement has taught me how to network with people in the automotive industry.”

Stephen Nicholson, a pre-law student double majoring in justice studies and Arabic, plans to specialize in intellectual property law in the automotive sector. “Working on cars is practical for life,” says Nicholson, who learned from his father as they rebuilt vehicles. He has taken advantage of several MAAP institutes, learning about high-performance engines, electrical wiring systems and clutch assemblies.

“Cole is a super-awesome resource,” he says. “I enjoy learning from him about automobile restoration and systems and about business and entrepreneurship.”

Itkin also appreciates Scroggham’s “shop chats” on topics such as setting up an enterprise





Cole Scrogam prepares tires for mounting on a classic vehicle at the Madison Automotive Apprentices shop.

and tax codes. “He has experience that he shares with us that could be important to any small business or nonprofit organization,” Itkin says.

MAAP intern Erik McIntosh, a JMU engineering student, is building on his already extensive experience as an automotive technician at a Northern Virginia dealership. He is accustomed to working on 30 commuter vehicles a day, and has found his MAAP experience refreshing because “there is time for research and study” to restore vintage and classic cars. “I enjoy disassembling, cataloging and photographing the components, all with the goal of maintaining the authenticity of the vehicle as it is rebuilt,” he says.

With its combination of hands-on restoration work, networking opportunities and the expertise of the Scrogams, MAAP seems to have struck a winning balance.

“My major, philosophy, doesn’t have an obvious connection to cars,” says junior David Carmichael, “but I’m interested in the development of language and cars serve as a common denominator in what is largely a social world of car enthusiasts. MAAP is bringing people together through their cars.

“I appreciate being part of the development of MAAP at JMU,” Carmichael says. “This experience, coupled with doing well in my classes and other pursuits, will be beneficial. I’m not sure yet what I will do after graduation, but I have options that I didn’t before, thanks to MAAP.”



To view a video about the Madison Automotive Apprentices Program, go to j.mu/maap.

Who is riding in the family car?

The Scrogam family’s expertise and reputation in the worlds of precision-vehicle restoration and motor-sports team management are unparalleled, but their links to JMU make Madison Automotive Apprentices’ establishment at the university personal.

A three-generation relationship with JMU helped cement the collaboration between the nonprofit and the university. Weldon Scrogam was a day student in the 1960s before founding G&W Sales and Service, specializing in Porsche, Volkswagen and other classic cars, in 1971. He still has the 1965 Porsche 911 from his college days.

Cole Scrogam (‘90, ‘16M) returned to JMU to study nonprofit organizations in the Master of Public Administration program with an eye toward establishing MAAP. With that foundation, Scrogam pitched the venture to JMU President Emeritus Linwood H. Rose, who knows a thing or two about sports cars.

Rose and Bob Kolvoord, dean of the College of Integrated Science and Engineering, saw the potential benefits the apprentice program could offer not only engineering majors, but students from all academic majors. Plus, Kolvoord knew one of the principals in the enterprise, Cole’s son, Michael (‘17), who majored in engineering and is the MAAP shop manager.

The Scrogam name is well known in vehicle restoration and motor-sports team management. Their years of doing precise restoration work and developing a reputation for excellence led to clinching the Manhattan Concours trophy four consecutive years from 1992 to 1995. Dating to the 1950s, “there is no greater trophy in the restoration world,” says Cole, who adds that

preparing vehicles for the competition demanded 2,000 hours of work per car.

Cole’s team management skills took the family to the world of International Motor Sports Association racing, eventually resulting in recognition as an eight-time national champion team owner with Porsche from 2000 to 2005. He remains involved in racing, serving as chassis engineer for an Audi team in the IMSA series. His hands-on experience in Porsche racing and restoration led to his writing two technical publications, *Porsche 356 Carrera: Four Cam Production Car* and *Porsche 911 Engine Assembly Guide*.

“MAAP was established and is being developed to connect generations,” Cole Scrogam says. “We have students with different majors and clients from different walks of life. The one thing that connects them is cars.”

Sounds like family.



(L-R): Michael Scrogam, Mark Porsche, Weldon Scrogam and Cole Scrogam with Michael’s car, which won an overall Group Award at Porsche Parade 2016.

Beyond the Scrogam family associated with the automobile world, more members have JMU connections:

- Katherine Reed Galloway (‘66, ‘87M), Cole’s mother
- Suanne Chandler Scrogam (‘89), Cole’s wife
- Cassandra Scrogam Estes (‘98), Weldon and Katherine’s daughter