

# AG EDUCATION

## Precision agriculture takes off at Walla Walla Community College

Walla Walla Community College's Precision Agriculture program is growing the future. Drone land and crop monitoring, computerized mapping systems, high tech controls, sensors, monitoring systems and guidance systems help the modern farmer continuously produce more food, fiber and fuel. Modern farmers know that new technology increases their efficiency.

WWCC Precision Ag courses include up-to-the-minute information on field maps, mapping programs and asset mapping strategies. Aerial imagery of planting, spraying and harvesting is popular with the students. They learn that yield data and soil lab data are essential for growing a better tomorrow.

WWCC Precision Agriculture Instructor Mike Hagerman says, "Precision Agriculture is much more than particular practices used by modern farmers.

With today's technology we can divide a single field in to separate management zones based on inherent variability. Growers are increasing yields, leaving smaller carbon footprints, and applying fewer chemicals, all in addition to saving time and money."

Jerry Anhorn Jr., Dean of Agriculture, Energy and Natural Resources at WWCC, is bullish on Precision Agriculture education. He says, "Send your sons and daughters to WWCC. Your agriculture enterprise will definitely benefit from their education here."

Agriculture instructor Matt Williams says, "One of the greatest benefits of learning at WWCC is that everything is so hands-on. The students are learning not just from instructors but from practitioners. For instance in our Animal Science area Tyler Cox is a working cattle rancher who teaches two

courses for us. Debbie Frazier comes from a local family farm and she is our Ag Business instructor. I work summers as an agronomist with local firms. This sets us apart from a lot of other institutions. We truly do practice what we preach."

Dean Jerry Anhorn is enthusiastic on the employability of Precision Ag graduates. He says, "There are hundreds or even thousands of careers in Agriculture. Computer driven tractors, combines, and systems are all tied together. Who's going to run and understand that stuff? We need tech-savvy people to do that! Precision Ag graduates will get more than living wage jobs and the industry is screaming for these people. Agriculture touches every part of our economy in the United States, plain and simple."

Jerry Anhorn can be reached at [jerry.anhorn@wwcc.edu](mailto:jerry.anhorn@wwcc.edu) or by calling 509-524-4809.

## Ag education thrives at UI

The Agricultural Education program at the University of Idaho continues to be a leader in teacher education in agriculture. The faculty in the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education work with undergraduates and graduate students preparing to become secondary agriculture teachers.

University of Idaho Agricultural Education majors have numerous opportunities to gain experiences throughout the year. Students assist with the FFA District and State Career Development Events, assist with the Idaho and Washington FFA State Leadership Conferences, and help run events at the National FFA Convention each fall. Four professors in Agricultural Education coordinate National FFA Career Development Events at the convention.

Agricultural Education majors also participate in the un-

dergraduate research program in the department. Ag Ed majors' research projects have been presented at the university research symposium and regional and national research conferences. Teacher Candidates also participate in the Collegiate FFA Chapter in the department which was recently recognized as the Club of the Year in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences.

Our students do amazing things at the college and university levels. Maggie Elliot of Prosser, Washington, received the CALS Outstanding Freshman Award. Seth Pratt, former National FFA Officer from Blackfoot, Idaho, was recognized as the CALS Outstanding Senior. The department's faculty has also been recognized for their outstanding service. Dr. Allison Touchstone received the R.M. Wade Excellence in Teaching Award in the college

in 2014 and Dr. Jeremy Falk received the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture Teaching Award of Merit in 2015.

The Agricultural Education program continues to graduate outstanding Teacher Candidates for agricultural education positions. Eighteen Teacher Candidates are being placed in Idaho, Washington, Oregon and Alaska schools for their student-teaching in 2015-2016. Recent graduates are teaching agriculture or science in Idaho, Washington, Oregon, Nevada, Colorado, North Dakota and Alaska.

The Agricultural Education program at the University of Idaho continues to produce outstanding secondary agricultural teachers/FFA advisers for schools throughout the Pacific Northwest and across the country. Come join us at the University of Idaho.



Mitch Lies/For the Capital Press

Joleen Schilling, pictured in Chemeketa Community College's teaching gardens, is working to align the school's horticulture program with Oregon State University's so students can transfer credits.

## Teacher takes unique route to classroom

By MITCH LIES  
For the Capital Press

SALEM — Joleen Schilling frequently tells her students that it's all right to deviate from a career path.

"It's not a straight path," said Schilling, who began teaching in Chemeketa Community College's agricultural sciences program in September. "That's what I tell my students all the time. You don't have to take a straight path through life. You can deviate."

Schilling bases her comments on experience.

Although she knew at the age of 15 that she wanted to work with plants, Schilling deviated at one point into the environmental sciences, even getting a master's degree in the field from Oregon State University and working for the Corvallis Environmental Center for a brief stint.

"I quickly learned that nonprofits are not for me," she said.

Schilling has a bachelor's degree in horticulture science, also from OSU.

She discovered her love for teaching while in the graduate studies program at OSU.

"I had a graduate teach-

ing assistantship that helped pay for my graduate degree," Schilling said, "and when I worked my first class, Biology 101, I thought: 'This is amazing.' That is when I realized I could combine the two, horticulture and teaching."

Schilling went on to teach part-time at Linn-Benton Community College while working full-time at Garland Nursery in Corvallis. Then in 2011, Schilling spent a year working full-time in the agricultural sciences program at Linn-Benton, filling in for the chair, who took a one-year sabbatical.

"That is when I made it my goal to find a full-time teaching position, knowing that that is what I am passionate about," she said.

Finally, in July of last year, Schilling had her full-time teaching post, taking over for horticultural instructor Gail Gredler, who retired after seven years in the post.

Joel Keebler, director of Chemeketa's agricultural sciences program, said Schilling is a good fit to continue and expand the horticulture program that Gredler started.

"Joleen has been deeply connected with the nursery

industry in the Willamette Valley for more than 10 years," Keebler said, "and we are very excited about the experience and energy she brings to our up-and-coming horticulture program."

One of Schilling's first tasks, Keebler said, is to create a bridge between Chemeketa's horticulture program and OSU's so students can transfer agricultural science credits from Chemeketa to OSU.

The community college's horticulture program currently offers only an applied science degree, one that is designed to prepare students for work, not for transferring credits.

"We see a good potential for growth in our horticulture program in connecting with Oregon State University," Keebler said.

Schilling said she welcomes the challenge.

After all, she said, one thing a circuitous path teaches those who traverse it is an enthusiasm for embracing challenges.

"It feels sometimes surreal," Schilling said, when asked how she feels about obtaining what she calls her 'dream job.' "I didn't take a very straight path, which makes me feel pretty lucky."

*Education that matters to modern farmers, ranchers and their families.*

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