

Plenty of career opportunities for people who want to work in the trades

TRADE from Page 1

He wants to stay involved in the ranch but also have a career with Holt of California, a Caterpillar equipment dealer with several locations around the state.

"I'd like to see something other than agriculture, to see both sides of the spectrum," said Piatt, noting that ranching will help him see things from the customer's point of view. "I'd be working both sides."

Piatt is one of a growing number of young people seeking agriculture-related careers without attending high-priced, four-year universities. They attend trade schools, apprenticeships, internships and other programs that open the door to well-paying jobs operating, maintaining and repairing today's high-tech farm and timber equipment. A student who wants to work in or around agriculture can qualify for a variety of jobs, from work as a mechanic in the service department of a dealership that caters to the farming community to running logging equipment in the woods.

"It's something that I would do every day," said first-year trainee Chase Tanaka, whose family raises beef cattle and sheep in Dixon, Calif. "I tinker all the time at home, working on tractors on the farm."

While programs such as ThinkBIG are largely geared to the construction industry, skills such as how to install and run a GPS system are readily adaptable to ag, said John Livingston, an equipment operations and maintenance instructor at Shasta College in Redding, Calif.

"The whole industry is getting more technical," Livingston said. "We're seeing a lot of students with bachelor's degrees come back in here."

Options available

Shasta's heavy equipment program offers certification in various trades such as welding, equipment operations and maintenance. Students take two semesters of hands-on training and get jobs at agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service or California Department of Fish and Wildlife or with private logging or construction companies.

Among the hands-on training the students receive is work with a GPS system developed by Topcon Positioning Systems Inc., and a Field Rover system that can help the user plan a field with detail down to the size of a sugar cube, Livingston said. Among its uses is helping a farmer determine where to lay irrigation lines, he said.

Hal Williams, 39, was handling security in high-rise buildings in Dallas before moving to Redding with his family in 2011. He went through the program at Shasta College and now works for Warner Enterprises, a logging company.

"For three years I was on a hand crew for fires," Williams said. "It was for fire that I originally went into this. ... There's a lot of crossover between logging and firefighting (equipment) — a lot of dozers and transports. Warner Enterprises



Courtesy of Andy Winnett
Students Joe Duckett and Kyle Logan work on a tractor as part of the John Deere Tech program at Walla Walla Community College in Walla Walla, Wash. The program is one of several offered by large equipment companies in conjunction with local community colleges around the nation.



Tim Hearden/Capital Press

Hal Williams of Redding, Calif., went to work for a logging company after graduating from the heavy equipment program at Shasta College a year and a half ago. He worked in security in Dallas before moving to Redding in 2011 and looking for new career options.

Too expensive

prises had some involvement with fire and picked me up."

The college is developing a two-semester certificate program geared specifically to heavy logging equipment, Livingston said.

"There's a big demand for equipment operators in the woods," he said. "We've had tremendous support from the logging industry in terms of (identifying) what they want in that certificate. That program will be looking at more internships, where students will work with a company in the woods."

There are plenty of career opportunities for people who want to work in the trades, educators say. The retirement of the Baby Boomer generation is leaving a dearth of skilled workers in every field, from welding to truck driving.

"There's an acute shortage of plain old truck drivers these days," said Richard Vedder, director of the Washington, D.C.-based Center for College Affordability and Productivity. "There's a shortage of welders. There are quite a few jobs that are not traditional book-learning kinds of jobs."

Truckers are valuable to agriculture, too, as growers need to move harvested commodities to processors or ship them to buyers.

"A lot of growers just want people who can physically get equipment to a job site," Livingston said.

Any of these skills can enable a worker to draw a decent wage fairly quickly. For instance, heavy equipment mechanics earn a median income of \$21.51 an hour, with some taking home as much as \$76,000 a year including bonuses and profit-sharing proceeds, according to a PayScale Inc. survey of employers.

The opportunities come as some high school graduates are questioning the need — and the effectiveness — of spending hundreds of thousands of dollars seeking a university degree with no guarantees of work afterward.

Only 56 percent of the students who enter America's colleges and universities graduate within six years, and the high cost of college is a key factor in why students drop out, according to a 2012 study by Harvard University.

Of those who do graduate, only 27 percent get jobs related to their majors, and only 62 percent of graduates have jobs that actually require a college degree, according to a 2013 report by economists from the Federal Reserve Bank of New York.

"People are spending a couple bucks to get degrees and bagging groceries at Walmart," said Max Jones, a training developer for Holt who hires students for the ThinkBIG program.

These statistics are a key reason overall college enrollment in the U.S. has declined for the past five years, although enrollment in university agriculture departments throughout the West is still growing briskly.

"I do think there is a tendency or trend for students to be skeptical of traditional approaches to getting competency and vocations," Vetter said. "They're looking at alternatives that are cheaper and more effective in getting a job."

As an example, undergraduate tuition and campus-based fees at the University of California-Davis totaled \$14,420 for the 2017-18 school year. All told, the university estimates that a student living on

campus will spend as much as \$33,433 annually for tuition and fees, books, room and board, transportation and personal expenses, spokeswoman Julia Ann Easley said.

By contrast, the ThinkBIG program has no tuition fees, although students must provide their own place to live and don't get paid for the weeks they're taking classes on campus, said Richard Dettloff, a program instructor.

For first-year student Daniel Adams, the high cost of college "was definitely a part" of his decision to apply to the ThinkBIG program, he said. A Cottonwood, Calif., resident, Adams was heavily involved in the diesel technology through FFA at West Valley High School and worked around his dad, a field service mechanic turned shop foreman. The family also raises livestock on leased property.

"I didn't know what I wanted to do until I found this program," Adams said. "It's pretty much exactly what I was looking for."

Case IH Agriculture and Farm Equipment and New Holland — and several individual dealership networks — also offer technician training programs around the West. In addition, many community colleges and private training programs offer training in diesel mechanics, electronics and other specialties such as welding.

Intensive training

Caterpillar Inc. started the ThinkBIG Technician Education program in 1997 at Illinois Central College in East Peoria, Ill. The program is now taught in nearly a dozen community and technical colleges across the country and about 20 throughout the world, Jones said.

Among the others is the 10-year-old program at Portland Community College, which works with dealers such as Peterson Machinery Co. in the Pacific Northwest.

In the first two years of the state-approved apprenticeship, students spend about half the time at the college campus doing technical and general education coursework and the other half at their sponsoring dealer, where they work as paid interns.

In the remaining two years, students work as full-time apprentice technicians at their sponsoring dealerships, receiving state journey-level certification at the end of the program. The dealerships



John Newton

hope the trainees will stay and make a career with their company.

With farmers and other customers spending hundreds of thousands of dollars for a machine expected to last many years, having capable people in the dealers' service department is critical, Jones said.

"As Cat dealers all we really have to sell is service," said Jones, whose dealership is based in Pleasant Grove, Calif. "... If the machine breaks down, the work stops."

John Deere has a similar program, the Ag and Turf Dealer Technician Program, which also combines lecture and laboratory class instruction with paid work at a John Deere dealership. Among its 16 U.S. locations is Walla Walla Community College in Washington state.

Aside from studying electrical and hydraulic systems, which is "like learning two foreign languages in one quarter," students master such general-education skills as math and writing, said Andy Winnett, who coordinates the Walla Walla program.

When a customer seeks high-dollar repairs, such as spending \$70,000 to correct a catastrophic failure of a cotton picker, "the guy in the shop has to write up a work order relative to what was just spent," Winnett said.

As the customer, "you want big details like the technician's version of 'War and Peace,'" he said. "Expensive equipment can have some big breakdowns."

Choosing a path

To be certain, some students interested in ag careers would be better served by universities, said Jim Aschwan, the California Agricultural Teachers Association's executive director. One advantage for university ag departments is that they tend to have good connections with industry leaders, he said.

"Our colleges of ag have pretty good linkage with industry folks," Aschwan said. "Most farmers know where these colleges of ag are."

And a degree from a college of ag is still versatile in its own right, said John Newton, the American Farm Bureau Federation's director of market intelligence.

"You can take an ag economics degree and do a lot of things," Newton said. "You can trade commodities ... or you can work in seed companies or food companies. There are a lot of options that an ag economics or ag science degree provides."

Aschwan believes universities will likely be "a bigger player" in developing the next generation of farmers.

Still, more students are starting to question the return on their investment in university degrees, while others are discovering the value of career-technical training only after getting

their bachelor's degree and floundering, he said.

"It's still frustrating ... because so many of the people who are into their mid-20s to late 30s have already given up 15 or 20 years of potential income they would have had if they'd known about the (career) programs when they were in high school," he said.

For older students, a trade program that enables them to draw a paycheck during or immediately after certification may be more practical than going away to college for four years.

Clayton Churchill, 27, was building houses in Washington state after his discharge from the Army, where his four years of service included a tour in Baghdad. He wasn't making much money with a hammer, so he came to Shasta College, where he has a certificate in diesel mechanics and is earning another one in welding.

As a single father with five children, Churchill didn't find the idea of a university appealing.

"Heavy equipment will make me a well-rounded opportunity for an employer," he said.

Twyla Maxey and Jillian Duncan came to Shasta College through its Step Up program, a partnership with Shasta County's probation and sheriff's departments and other agencies to give job training to convicted felons. Both want to work in logging.

"I've thought about (pursuing a university degree), but I have six kids," said Maxey, 38, adding the heavy equipment program could lead to a job earning \$20 an hour. "It's an excellent start. It's an amazing program."

"If I could get a good job and work my way up, it's way better than a university," Duncan, 19, said.

Find your passion

Aschwan advises students that there's "no one universal path" in ag education and to make their training as well-rounded as possible.

"If you think ag engineering is your thing and you want to build things, take a few management classes and learn a little bit about money," he said. "If you think it's all about money ... take some production courses."

Jones, the Holt dealership's training developer, tells students to find their passion.

"Some kids like to farm," he said. "But there is that kid who got spanked for taking all his toys apart on Christmas morning to make them go faster."

Tanaka, the first-year ThinkBIG trainee, liked the idea that "you're in and out and making money by the time kids are just getting out of college with their education," he said.

"People are geared differently," Tanaka said. "It all depends on the kid and what they want to do. ... For me, I took ag mechanics, and doing something like this is more interesting than something like pesticides. That's just from my perspective."

Lawsuit: WDFW authorized killing of wolfpacks

WOLF from Page 1

Such actions violate SEPA because they are outside the bounds of the management plan and environmental impact statement, don't follow the department's rules and governing statutes, are not the result of a "reasoned decision-making process" and "are taken based on incomplete or erroneous facts," according to the lawsuit.

"WDFW has not only ignored, but actively suppressed, significant scientific research published since the plan's 2011 adoption, which demonstrates that killing wolves is not an effective way to decrease livestock depredations," the lawsuit states. "In fact, these studies show that killing wolves may actually increase wolf depredation on livestock."

The research shows that state-sponsored killing of wolves "leads to devaluing of the species, a loss of social tolerance and increased poaching," according to the lawsuit.

Under the wolf plan, the department is required to perform a supplemental environmental impact statement to consider new scientific developments, the lawsuit states.

"It has acted in an arbitrary and capricious manner by actively refusing to consider these developments in implementing its kill orders," the lawsuit states.

"What they are attempting to do is take away the tool we have when wolves do not respond to non-lethal deterrence," said Scott Nielsen, president of Cattle Producers of Washington and vice president of Stevens County Cattlemen's

Association. "When you've done everything you can to prevent wolves from preying on livestock, the only option you have left as a rancher is to have WDFW remove those problem wolves."

Sarah Ryan, executive vice president of the Washington Cattlemen's Association, said her organization had not yet reviewed the entire lawsuit, but is concerned about the proposed injunction preventing the department from continuing to use its 2017 plan, calling it a "reasonable approach" to dealing with wolves that deplete on livestock.

"In our view, WDFW has followed the 2017 grazing season protocol to the 'T' and has not issued lethal action where it was not warranted," Ryan told the Capital Press.

'We're not giving up, we're not giving in'

GMO from Page 1

The appeals court has now upheld the ruling without comment, but GMO critics vow to continue the battle in the legislative arena.

"We're still firm in our resolve to protect farmers in Josephine County," said Mary Middleton, executive director of Oregonians for Safe Farms and Families. "We're not giving up, we're not giving in."

Middleton said her organization has decided not to pursue further litigation but will instead focus on persuading lawmakers to invalidate the pre-emption statute or otherwise allow Josephine County's ordinance to be enforced.

"The will of the people is being ignored," she said.

When passing the GMO pre-emption bill, lawmakers vowed to create a statewide system for overseeing GMOs, but instead they have left a

"regulatory void," Middleton said.

Under Oregon law, Jackson County lawfully approved a GMO ban because its initiative was on the ballot before the state pre-emption was approved.

The Oregon Legislature passed the pre-emption bill to avoid a county-by-county patchwork of restrictions for genetically engineered crops, said Scott Dahlman, policy director for Oregonians for Food and Shelter, an agribusiness group that opposed the GMO ban.

"We think the Legislature has spoken very clearly on this issue," he said. "Farmers should be allowed to choose what crops they grow."

Repeated attempts to overturn the pre-emption law have been made since it was originally enacted in 2013, but none have gained much traction, Dahlman said.

Because the Oregon Court of Appeals affirmed Wolke's ruling without opinion, the ruling doesn't set a binding precedent that other courts must follow, said John DiLorenzo, attorney for the Whites.

However, the decision is likely to be "persuasive" if the pre-emption issue should arise in other counties, since existing case law would support the same outcome, DiLorenzo said.

"They don't need further precedents. They've already got several," he said.

Josephine County's experience will probably dissuade similar ballot initiatives in other jurisdictions, since the legal arguments defending the GMO ban did not pass legal muster, DiLorenzo said.

"I think it would be very difficult to persuade anyone to put resources into an initiative that's destined to be a fool's errand," he said.