

Training Center builds construction careers

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expect to choose from a variety of career choices.

"The Apprenticeship program is directly related to the economy. There are a lot of jobs out there. They need a lot of people," said Levi.

Most trades are now required to be licensed. If a license is not required, a certain amount of employers are insisting their workers have educational training.

This requirement has had a direct effect on the 65-percent growth realized in the construction and apprenticeship programs. (See related story.)

"I don't know what our growth will be this year," says Levi, "but we have more students than we did last year. I'll probably see a growth of about a hundred students. As far as the total numbers, we'll probably see more than that."

Topping's program increased by more than 170 percent last year. If this is any indication of future growth, he expects enrollment to increase, perhaps as much as 100 percent.

Although some of this is attributed to growth, Levi recognizes it as "people knowing what type of training they can get here with a quality instructor."

Topping -- who, according to Levi, is too modest -- was the recipient of the Oregon Building Congress Award for outstanding service. The award was based on his efforts for preparing students for the apprenticeship program.

"What this says is that the industry has looked at our pro-

gram and was real excited about what we're doing and awarded it. But it's not only for me, it's for the whole program," said Topping.

During the daytime, there are some 40 to 50 students attending class. According to Levi, the majority of students attend evening classes.

"In apprenticeship, you have to be working in the trades to be in the program. So, our people are working full time and going to school at night, and they do that for four years," said Levi.

The emergence of women in the workforce, although not new, is just beginning to impact the construction industry.

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Bob Topping
Building Construction Instructor

industry," according to Topping. "Almost every woman we get in here, their employment is almost automatic. It's not because they are any better or worse than anyone else, but the fervor with which they attack their studies is a lot different than some of their counterparts."

Topping says it is dishearten-



Photo By Laney Fouse

A student carpenter carefully measures a post before cutting.

ing to see women being trained in other fields where entry level wages are about \$6 or \$7 an hour.

"In an apprenticeship, they are going to start way up the scale. And, when they leave, they're going to be in the \$20 to \$30 an hour range," he said.

He lists the industry's advantages as having flexible working schedules, tremendous wages and a variety of career choices.

"The industry is in such dire straits for trained individuals that they can't look at one gender as the only source of labor. The industry is working so diligently to try and change itself and get more women into the trades. Currently, only eight percent of the students taking construction classes are female."

The classes offered at the Training Center are not traditional.

There are no B.A.s or A.A.s offered.

"Most people do not graduate [with a degree] from our courses; that's not why we're here. They come for specific training or needs. We make up an education plan. What do we have that you need to make you better in your career? We don't count successes on [getting a degree]. We count successes on whether or not we meet the customer's need and are they able to go out and perform," said Topping.

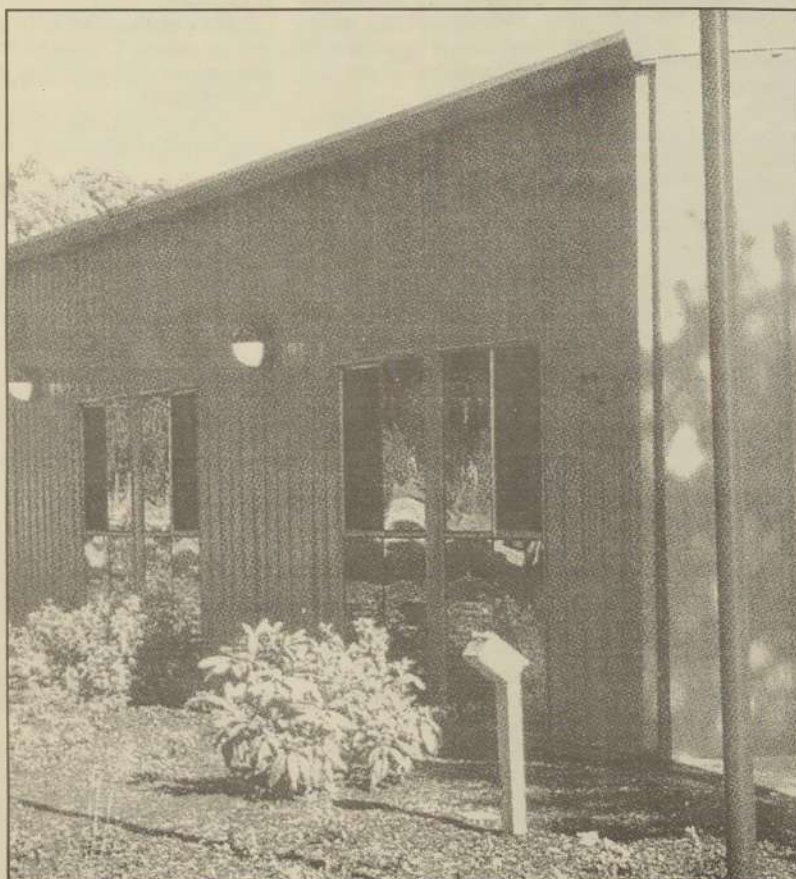
There are only three things you need to get started on a new career or update an old one says Topping, "Dependability, responsibility and integrity."

Clackamas' enrollment increases

Enrollment surged at Clackamas by almost five percent over last year's figures, beating out other community colleges in the Willamette Valley.

Students attending Clackamas on a full- and part-time basis total 27,573. This includes credit and noncredit classes.

According to College President John Keyser, the increase impacted the apprenticeship and technical education areas foremost.



Contributed photo

The Training Center is one of the busiest places on the Clackamas campus.



Photo by Laney Fouse

A Japanese carpentry student from the Mitsui Corporation in Japan is one day away from graduation. Students have been learning American building techniques.