

Letter to the Editor

The stinging irony is that Salazar's article "Former poli-sci instructor sued by counselor" (2/1/12) about a defamation lawsuit does little more than perpetuate the damaging language hurled in the original incidents, inflicting fresh pain for all involved. With great power (and freedom of the press), comes great responsibility. I would hope to see a higher level of ethics and discretion applied when reporting about such harmful content.

Sincerely,

Alice Nelson Lewis,
Department Chair of,
Communication Studies,
Journalism, and Theatre Arts
Communication Instructor

This letter has been edited for brevity and clarity.



Joshua Dillen The Clackamas Print

Josh Rader, 27, tests water samples for dissolved oxygen. Oxygen levels indicate the presence of microbial activity in the sample and influence how it is treated.

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Dirty water makes for great paying career

By Joshua Dillen
Associate News Editor

Driving through southwest Milwaukie on state highway 99E has a memorable effect on the senses. The sense of smell, to be exact, will be stimulated.

The Kellogg Waste Water Treatment Plant, as offensive as it may seem to some, is a necessary part of the infrastructure in Clackamas County. The plant serves a huge part of the county and can process up to 10 million gallons of wastewater per day, serving 77,800 people from Gladstone to Milwaukie and Happy Valley. Somebody has to make sure these residents won't have to worry about what happens to dirty water after it spirals down the drain, or if it flows into wetlands and watersheds after becoming contaminated at a manufacturing plant.

The US Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics reports the median yearly income for Water and Wastewater Treatment Plant System Operators is \$40,770. They also report the number of jobs in this field is projected to increase by 20 percent from 113,400 in 2008 to 135,900 in 2018 nationally.

Publicly and privately run plants in Molalla, Wilsonville, Oregon City and other municipalities in Clackamas County are partly staffed by students who have completed the Water and Environmental Technology (WET) program at the college. There is a one year certificate available and a two year degree offered at the college in this overlooked field. The program doesn't require you to be nationally certified and licensed to receive your degree or certificate, but once you are "you are employable in 39 states and worldwide. There are opportunities in the Middle East and developing countries," said Matthew LaForce.

LaForce is the Department Chair of the Engineering and Sciences Division at the college, which "houses" the WET Program. He is responsible for the students who may end up dealing with waste infused water processed by such plants. "We're the only institution [in the Northwest] providing this current training for students," said LaForce.

Wastewater treatment may not seem that glamorous, but the bang for your buck when spending money on education is something that LaForce feels strongly about. He described how the college prepares students by linking internships with local municipalities and worldwide companies like

Veolia Water. Veolia, founded in 1853, provides water and wastewater services for municipal and industrial clients. The company employs more than 96,000 people worldwide. According to their website, they are a division of Veolia Environment, the largest environmental company in the world.

"Our department is tightly linked to industry," LaForce said. "The more skill sets I can give you to get that job that's critical."

Tony Morales, is a student in the WET program. He has mainly worked as a welder in the past, but has always had a love for water. When he was laid off as a welder, he decided to go back to school. The WET program was the best way for him to enter a field that he can make a decent living while enjoying what he does.

"It's always been a passion of mine, the water," Morales said. "How are we battling the bacteria in our water or how to clean up wastewater?"

Morales said he enjoyed the program, especially the support and networking that is available going through the program as he pursues the WET Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree.

Josh Rader, is also pursuing his AAS in the program. A career change as well as and love of water brought him to the program. He feels strongly about ensuring we have quality places to fish and healthy watersheds.

"It feels good to know you are doing something for the environment," Rader said. "And to know that microbes, living things, help to clean the water, it's interesting to say the least."

Rader liked that the degree allows you many options in the field. He mentioned how Veolia had national and worldwide employment opportunities doing lab work inside, field work outdoors in natural settings, or plant operations. He added that the industry had job opportunities that would suit almost any type of personality.

"I wanted to find out more about how we keep our rivers and streams clean," said Tracy Colgan. "I want to improve the quality of the earth."

Colgan used to work in grounds maintenance and seasonally in the industry of water treatment. Her seasonal work in the field led to enrolling at CCC in the WET program to learn more about water treatment and expand her career possibilities.

LaForce chuckled about seeing some of his students a few years after they've graduated driving Acuras and "I'm still driving along in a Hyundai. It's great to see."

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