

STEM takes root

Campus talks preach gospel about science, technology, engineering and mathematics

BY CASSIDY WHITE

Clackamas Community College is now offering STEM talks to students who are interested in learning more about what's going on in the world of applied sciences.

STEM is an acronym for science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Therefore, STEM talks are presented by instructors who are involved in any one of those fields.

According to Tory Blackwell, a science instructor at the college, STEM talks are essentially an opportunity for students on campus to be exposed to a wide variety of different research topics in STEM fields. Although STEM talks are tailored to students interested in the sciences, Blackwell argues that these talks are applicable to students of various disciplines.

"Almost everything that people are doing on campus probably has some STEM connection," he said. He explained that students interested in art and mix paint, for example, are doing chemistry, and

students who are interested in graphic design are, in fact, using technology.

"We have a lot of students who probably are STEM students, and they don't realize they're STEM students, so hopefully this will give them an opportunity to self-identify," said Blackwell. Blackwell also mentioned an additional purpose for STEM talks.

"We wanted to try and remove that stigma people have when they see science classes like, 'Oh, science classes these are hard and they're crazy.' Hopefully these STEM talks will allow some of those students to realize that people in STEM are just like everybody else in all of the other areas of education," said Blackwell.

When asked about the selection process for the speakers of these talks, Blackwell said, "At this point, most of the instructors on campus are relying on our networking skills." In fact, the guest speaker of the last STEM talk, David Estrada from

Boise State University, got connected to the college through Blackwell himself.

Estrada's STEM talk on Friday, Jan. 15, was focused on emerging nanomaterials, more specifically, graphene.

In his talk, he presented research he'd personally done with graphene, the "wonder material."

Estrada said, "I like to reach students with the kind of research that we're doing. I think the topics that we're covering, the new material I'm going to talk about, is kind of a material of the future, so I think it's important to get out and show what we're doing with it and expose the next generation of STEM students and work force to new materials, new research."

When asked about the value of STEM talks, Estrada said, "I think this kind of seminar brings two things to a community like Clackamas. First, it's going to expose non-traditional students to speakers who may have a similar background and

how they were able to get into STEM and STEM careers. The other part is that a lot of what's in the STEM textbooks is dated; it's, you know, like 10 years old, so this offers the opportunity to show cutting edge, state-of-the-art results and really show what different universities are doing and what kind of new ideas are emerging in the STEM fields."

Jeff Takahashi, a student at Clackamas majoring in computer science, has been to both STEM talks this year and said "It's interesting stuff regardless of what it is." He also stated that STEM talks are "something applied from all of the book work."

STEM talks are open to the public with no cost to attend. There will be at least one more talk scheduled for the end of May, which will feature a student-selected speaker. Those who are interested in attending an upcoming talk can watch for notifications and flyers when definite dates are available.

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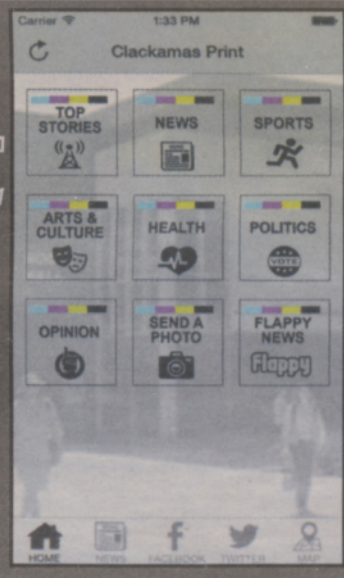
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CORRECTIONS: In issue 9 of the Clackamas Print, Phil Reid's and Mary Hutchins' names were printed wrong. We apologize for the error.

ON THE COVER: English department chair Sue Mach is staging two plays in Portland metro this winter. Photo by Victoria Tinker. Cover design by Brandon Chorum.

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