

Featured Story

OIT grads add to community



Job placement rates for Oregon Tech remain high

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Friday, September 14, 2007 7:25 PM PDT

Oregon Institute of Technology graduates span nearly six decades as the college celebrates its 60th anniversary this year.

The year starts with the grand opening of a new health professions building that will provide classroom space and programs for 750 new students.

Job placement rates remain high, and the average annual salary for graduates in 2005-06 was \$48,000.

Many graduates choose to stay and work in the community and stay connected to OIT and its programs.

Kristi Redd, a 1978 graduate, and Russ Carter, a 1990 graduate, are examples of former students who built on the education they received and now make significant contributions to the community and beyond.

Growing with AmeriTitle

Redd, 51, is assistant manager and certified senior escrow officer at the Klamath Falls office of AmeriTitle.

"We were a 10-person title and escrow operation; now we employ 550 people in 41 offices," Redd said.

When she started with the then Mountain Title Company of Klamath County in 1979, the community was deeply stressed by the decline of the lumber industry.

"I've grown with the company," she said. "When I first started doing escrow closings, people were crying because they were selling their homes for less than they paid."

She attributes some of her growth to the atmosphere of Oregon Institute of Technology and the professors who taught her as she studied legal secretarial science.

Her parents, both educators, helped her find OIT, and friends her parents had in the community became second family to her.

Instructors taught practical knowledge

"The instructors not only taught the subject, they went out into the businesses and found out what their needs were to get the students the skills they would need," Redd said. "Sometimes they even worked in those businesses in the summers."

The associate degree she earned was primarily the degree the school offered then, as she recalled. In small classrooms, instructors would get to know students, and those students would thrive.

Redd benefited from OIT's placement service. She knew she didn't want to work in a large community. Klamath Falls seemed right.

"My first job was at Klamath First Federal, and I got it through the placement service. Doors opened after that, and I took the opportunities."

She recently became a new member of the OIT Foundation Board. She has been working on the campaign to raise money for the health profession center.

"I've come to a point in my life where OIT did something for me to help my career, and I want to give something back," she said.

Russ Carter

When Russ Carter, president of ZCS Engineering, earned his degree from OIT in 1990, the school was already placing, as he recalled, about 97 percent of the engineers it graduated.

Now he can point to numerous projects in the community the firm designed and engineered, and he thinks there's no school that would have been better than OIT.

Carter, 39, was the son of a general contractor, also an OIT graduate, and living in Medford when he decided to enroll at OIT in 1985.

"It took me five years to graduate. I changed majors two or three times, all in the engineering field," he said. "Early on, I was exposed to varied course work, and it took me a while to find my way to structural engineering. It was hard to leave school, I was enjoying it so much."

Still in his first job

In his fifth year, he went to work for his structural engineering professor, Richard Zbinden. He has been with the firm ever since, and ZCS has expanded its presence to Bend, Portland and Grants Pass.

"When I started in this business at 21, I was fortunate to have a community of contractors, local agencies and private sector firms who were tolerant of me. I've learned a wealth of knowledge from them."

Recent significant ZCS projects include the occupational health project at OIT, the new Herald and News building and a 1.3-million gallon water tank for the city of Klamath Falls, which

serves the Stewart Lenox area.

"All the work we do for local municipalities is especially satisfying," he said.

Carter, the general manager and several design team leaders in the firm are OIT engineering graduates. He said he keeps close track of what is going on at the school.

He sits on a technical advisory committee for OIT, which meets occasionally, and he established an endowment in Richard Zbinden's name. He sits on panels to advise students in career placement.

"OIT is such an incredibly extensive curriculum, people come out ready for anything," he said.