

Trades school and university “combo” opens in Cloverdale

“There is nothing like it” says acting dean

Brian Martin

According to Dana Goedbloed, there is no greater high than seeing a student launched on a path to success in life.

Goedbloed is the acting dean of Kwantlen University College’s new Cloverdale Trades and Technology Centre. “There is nothing like it,” she said. “Believe me, when you see a student coming in on the first day and he is afraid or has an attitude – or has not been successful in the past – and then he walks out on that last day and he has his head up, man, there is nothing like it.”

Goedbloed has spent some 20 years in the world of adult education in Edmonton, Grande Prairie and the Lower Mainland. She moved to the new facility from Kwantlen’s campus in the Newton area of Surrey.

Due to officially open this week, the Cloverdale facility is in fact already open, full of students and very busy.

“Nothing like it” also describes the Trades and Technology Centre itself. Its curriculum, its vision and its actual architecture all aim at breaking the accepted look and approach of traditional trades training institutions. The architect was Bunting Coady Architects, and the general contractor was Ledcor Construction Ltd. The building is built to meet LEED gold standards – a key indicator of environmental construction in North America.

Its bright atrium design certainly resembles a new community college, rather than an industrial-style “trades school.”

While trades training remains at the core of the institution, it plans to be a blend of traditional training and academic learning – a combination of university and trades school. It is capable of providing not only trades training but also degree and diploma programs.

It is, in fact, all part of the lifelong learning path many men and women today are commonly following. In the trades arena, for example, tradespeople who have trained and worked as electricians may eventually wish to establish their own electrical contracting company.

To do this, they will require not just their electrical skills and experience but business management training, too. Kwantlen can give them that. On the other hand, a considerable number of people who already have university



Opportunities: welding training facility at the new Kwantlen University College Trades and Technology Centre is a North American leader

degrees are taking trades training in order to make themselves more employable.

Currently, there are 500 full-time equivalent students at the facility. Counting heads at a trades training school is a complicated matter, as many students do not attend full time.

Eventually, the \$43 million high-tech campus will accommodate up to 900 students and will focus on trades, technology and applied training programs. One of the many advanced training shops at the new campus is the welding facility, and it is hailed as the most high-tech training facility in North America. Students are drawn from three primary sources. First, there are the classic apprenticeship programs, which see students attend for a set number of weeks per year and then return to their jobs. The second group consists of foundation (formerly entry-level training) students who have limited experience on job sites but a strong desire to explore work in a trade. The third, is a partnership between the university college with Richmond, Delta, Surrey and Langley school districts.

It is part of a provincial program called ACE IT. It sees secondary students in either Grade 11 or Grade 12 start their trades training while still in public school. As part of that training, they will spend a portion of their year

at the Cloverdale Trades Training and Technology Centre. This means, when they leave high school, they already have their first year of trades training under their belts, and are well launched down a path that will lead to journeyman status.

There is no doubt there will be jobs waiting for them.

According to industry estimates, British Columbia will need to fill an estimated one million job openings over the next 12 years.

Some 700,000 of those jobs will be in the trades and technology sector.

“We’re working very hard to increase access to higher learning, particularly in the fast growing trades area,” said Kevin Falcon, B.C.’s transportation minister and MLA for Surrey/Cloverdale.

The new Cloverdale facility is exactly the sort of thing the construction industry needs, according to Keith Sashaw, president of the Vancouver Regional Construction Association. “It is encouraging to see so many enthusiastic young people wanting to join our industry,” he said.

In addition to offering trades training, the Cloverdale campus will be home to the public safety communications (9-1-1) and CADD/drafting programs. ■