

Getting with the program

New Clark College workforce education director to promote transportation programs

BY MEGAN PATRICK

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Growing up in a struggling region of Montana, Joe Renouard saw the need for a skilled workforce capable of earning enough money to raise a family. Since then, that passion for workforce development has been central in his long career in education and training, and led him to his new position as Clark College's acting director of workforce education.

Renouard took over the position in July and has a slew of goals for the department headed into the new year.

"I can appreciate the haves and the have-nots," Renouard said. "The have-nots have not often had the opportunities to prosper. It's always a goal of mine to allow them to work from a level playing field."

A product of community colleges himself, Renouard studied in the liberal arts transfer program at Spokane Falls Community College. He went on to earn a bachelor's degree in international studies at The Evergreen State College and a master's degree in

education from the University of Washington – his master's study focused on education and training for the workplace.

His training also includes the Washington Executive Leadership Academy, the National Academy of Management Training in Detroit and studies in Labor Market Information Planning through North Texas State University and the Department of Labor.

Renouard has worked in the private and public sectors in education and training. On the private side, he developed training programs, such as one he created for TriMet electromechanical workers.

As director of Shoreline Community College's Workforce Education Program, his "career ladder" program was awarded best workforce program in the nation by the American Association of Community Colleges and U.S. Dept. of Labor.

"I am always trying to address putting together a career ladder for individuals, to ensure their first job is not their last job," Renouard said. "We want to promote their career to the

highest level and provide the means so that they can get family-wage jobs."

In late January, his department will roll out a construction training program in partnership with the Clark County Skills Center, and the college is particularly encouraging women to get involved.

He also plans on developing more programs related to the transportation industry.

"With the ports being the economic engines they are, I feel that a lot of jobs that are dependent on a vital port coming in and out of the region."

The market is seeing a shortage of truck drivers,

and the existing pool of drivers is on the older side. More training opportunities would address that demographic by pumping younger drivers into the pool, Renouard reasoned.

Port jobs don't end at truck drivers. They include warehousing, supply chain logistics, rail road operators, engineers and construction.

"What happens when you don't have a skilled labor pool, you import labor from elsewhere," he said. "The goal is to have



Joe Renouard puts an emphasis on port-related jobs.

good jobs here."

Renouard said it is imperative for the business community to work with the college in shaping the future workforce.

"The college has the facilities, instructors and curriculum," he said. "But we don't have all the resources."