

Launching high-tech careers

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— Ron Gompertz, research development manager for Hewlett-Packard



PHOTOS BY DANIELLE FROST / POST-RECORD

Keith Stansbury, head of the Clark College CAD/Engineering Applications department, helps students launch rockets during SEMI High Tech U last week. The program targets 14- to 17-year-old students who have an interest in high-tech fields.

□ Forty students spend three days learning about careers in science and engineering

By Danielle Frost
Post-Record staff

When Camas High School student Garrett Wilgus heard about a three-day opportunity to explore science and math careers, he was eager to learn.

“I thought this would be a great opportunity to find out whether I’m really interested in the industry and see if it would be the right opportunity for me,” he said.

So, Wilgus, who will be a senior this fall, decided to apply for the SEMI High Tech U program, which is an industry-driven math and science-based career exploration event presented by the non-profit SEMI Foundation and local partners.

These include the Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council, Clark College, Hewlett-Packard, WaferTech, Clark County High Tech Community Council, Columbia Machine, Employers Overload and Underwriters Laboratories.

The program provides incoming

sophomores, juniors and seniors with an opportunity to learn how math and science are used in the high-tech world by sending them to work with experts in the field at various businesses.

The students also do mock interviews and discuss real-world problems with employees.

This year, students visited WaferTech, Clark College and Hewlett-Packard.

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Wilgus enjoys the chance the visit the various campuses.

“It’s been great so far,” Wilgus said. “We’ve done a lot of activities and I’ve really enjoyed working with all the people. The leadership has been good and I’ve just been having a great time. It’s great to see kids from all the different high schools come together.”

Students from Camas, Columbia River, Evergreen, Fort Vancouver, Heritage, Hudson’s Bay, Lewis & Clark, Loowit,

Mountain View, Skyview and Union high schools were all invited to participate.

Keith Stansbury, who heads the CAD/Engineering Applications programs at Clark College, was a volunteer mentor at the event.

“I enjoy seeing the students get excited about stuff,” he said. “They discover new things and go off in new directions and unfurl their wings. It’s fun.”

Brandi Stewart-Wood of the SWWDC said the program is all about connections.

“We want to get a pipeline of young people into high-tech careers,” she said. “This program really aims at the B and C students, the ones who have potential but lack expertise or experience. So far, we’ve been very successful in the response that we’ve received from students.”

CHS student Trent Harimoto decided to attend SEMI High Tech U because he enjoys science and technology.

“It’s pretty cool so far,” he said. “There are a lot of activities we can’t really do at home. It’s all really interesting and I’ve learned some cool stuff, too.”



Semi High Tech U gave Clark County students a chance to do several hands-on activities. At left, students prepare to launch a rocket. At center, CHS student Garrett Wilgus (left) works on building a rocket. At right, CHS students (from left, Jongkon Khommonthian, Derek Hood and Anita Bauer) listen intently to instructions.

