

EPCE tackles workforce challenges

The Energy Providers Coalition for Education (EPCE), a partnership of utility organizations, has come together to address the challenges facing the utility industry today. As an EPCE member, NWPPA is helping to develop, sponsor, and promote standardized, quality online learning programs that meet the unique needs of the utility workforce.

These accredited training programs, designed by the utility industry, for the utility industry, make it possible for both new and existing utility workers to update their skills, acquire new learning, and prepare for an increasingly technological future.

“There is a significant amount of industry knowledge being lost to retirement, making immediate education and training key as the industry brings on new hires,” says Arnie Winkler, NWPPA’s director of education.

Creative solution promotes continuous learning

With the industry facing twin challenges of workforce retirements and a shortage of skilled new employees, EPCE is providing one solution: a variety of instructor-led education offerings from accredited schools, including associate and bachelor degree programs, all delivered completely online.

“The education provided by EPCE can be delivered to employees as soon as they are hired or ready for advancement,” said Winkler. “It’s college-level learning, without the need to schedule time away from the office or pay for travel expenses.”

Online learning is convenient and flexible

EPCE courses are delivered online, making them ideal for our industry, which must accommodate rotating work schedules, outages, and other emergencies. The online format also makes EPCE programs attractive to young people and accessible by all. Students never need to step onto a campus, so EPCE students can

complete their coursework when it’s convenient for them — on weekends, late at night, or during lunch — and at their own pace.

Contrary to commonly held beliefs that if you’re not computer savvy then online learning is too difficult, students working on EPCE programs find the technology easy and very accessible. Overwhelmingly, students report back that if it weren’t for the scheduling flexibility that the online format provides, they wouldn’t be able to pursue this education. In addition to the professional benefits of education, many students realize personal benefits as they become role models for their children and other family members.

Lifelong learning is key

The challenges to the utility industry and its workforces may seem daunting; but creative, accessible education and training programs like those created and sponsored by EPCE make it possible to enhance the skills of the existing workforce, and identify and prepare the next generation. Lifelong learning is here to stay, and it is never too late, or too soon, to arm yourself with knowledge and skills.

To learn more about the various EPCE certificate, associate degree, and bachelor degree programs, and for enrollment information, visit www.epceonline.org/nwppa or call (877) 853-8200. **NWPPA**

BSC designated as national education center

United States Energy Secretary Samuel W. Bodman recently designated Bismarck State College (BSC) as the National Power Plant Operations Technology and Education Center. U.S. Senator Byron Dorgan made the announcement on May 18.

This official designation recognizes BSC as the premier national center of education and training for operators and technicians in the energy industry. BSC provides online and on-campus associate degree programs in electric power generation, transmission and distribution technologies, and process plant technology.

BSC President Larry C. Skogen said that without Sen. Dorgan’s confidence in BSC and his determination to follow through with legislation he authored in the 2005 Energy Bill, this federal designation would not have happened. **NWPPA**

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There is no cost to NWPPA members and your bid request will be seen by a regional audience of people and companies interested in the utility industry.

It’s another member benefit brought to you by NWPPA. For more information, please contact Debbie at (360) 254-0109, or debbie@nwppa.org.

Visit our RFP page at:
www.nwppa.org/web/rfp.shtml

The results are in!

The 2007 General Managers Wage & Compensation Survey and the Directors, Commissioners, and Other Elected Officials Survey reports are now available.

Visit NWPPA’s Web site at <http://www.nwppa.org/Surveys> for the results.

Questions? Call NWPPA at (360) 254-0109.