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CHALLENGES MEAN OPPORTUNITY

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There is benefit to being young and nimble. As a start-up institution Northwest College of Construction (NWCC) is able to make significant changes to answer the needs and challenges confronted during our first year of existence. We are also able to take advantage of new opportunities posed by contractors wanting to partner with NWCC in providing training for their industry and, in turn provide further opportunities for participants attending NWCC. We are positioning NWCC to become synonymous with **quality Construction Training, Resources and Information.**

Whether by choice or default, NWCC's business management model is that of a ***learning organization.***

By definition "A learning organization is skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights. Learning organizations are skilled at:

- Solving problems systematically
- Experimenting with new approaches
- Learning from their own experiences and past history as well as from the experiences of others."
- Transferring knowledge quickly and efficiently throughout the organization." (Wheelen & Hunger, 2002)

One can imagine the amount of 'new knowledge' acquired in a mere eight months and two terms of starting a college. However, being 'young and nimble' allows us to respond quickly and effectively to the challenges confronted this year and turn them into opportunities for next year. As we prepare next year's schedule, resolutions are becoming opportunities.

INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

Among the more innovative solutions, one that answers a couple challenges, is opening Modules within a given term to be taken as **Personal/Professional Development classes**. This model allows students with the proper prerequisites to focus on a topic within a given term of study i.e. *“Hand and Power Tool Safety”* within the first term of **Carpentry**, *“Drywall”* within the third term of **Carpentry**, *“Basic Electricity”* or *“Heat Pumps”* within given terms of **HVAC** classes, or *“Boom Truck Certifications”* within a term of **Heavy Equipment Operator** training, without having to endure the expense or time necessary to take an entire term of classes. This solution meets the challenges of both **reducing costs** to students and offering **Journey Upgrade** classes. Although this ‘solution’ will produce administrative challenges of its’ own, we believe the benefits to students are worth the effort.

Another challenge facing the college was a marketing campaign beyond the network of our sponsors and existing apprenticeship programs. NWCC has partnered with Karen Natzel and K Communications to this end. Our partnership and the professional presence, as well as the marketing strategy already under way, should bring NWCC the exposure it needs to **communicate the educational opportunities** we provide to our vast array of constituents; among them, **high school students, do-it-yourselfer homeowners, both residential and commercial contractors, as well as Project Managers and experienced craft practitioners** needing to brush up on some skills. This marketing challenge is now in the hands of capable professionals. Meaning, you should be hearing a lot more from and about NWCC.

NEW PROGRAMS & EXPANSION OF EXISTING PROGRAMS

New programs will include: Roofing Technology, daytime Carpentry classes, Welding, and a Do-it-Yourselfer Series offering homeowners an opportunity to learn, or improve upon, some valuable skills. **Expanding programs will include:** adding a fourth year to both the HVAC and Sheet Metal programs, offering all four levels of Heavy Equipment Operator Training, and a month long intensive Carpentry class at Blue Mountain Community College in Pendleton.

The exciting opportunity that is offered by providing new programs is that any program set up at NWCC to meet contractor’s needs for training also provides an opportunity for Personal/Professional Development students as well, by being broken into smaller parts. Since we are **licensed with the Oregon Department of Education as a Career School**, anyone has the opportunity begin training in a given trade without being a participant in the apprenticeship programs. “Career Students” can take classes right alongside apprentices and

get the same valuable training offered to those officially enrolled in apprenticeship. Many opportunities are available at NWCC. Keep an eye on our website, www.nwcoc.com, and your mailbox for further details.

Reference:

Wheelen, Thomas L. & Hunger, David J. (2004). *Strategic Management and Business Policy*. New Jersey: Pearson Publications.