

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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(Pictured left to right) Front: Jacob Walker, Lee Sasser, and Michael Hannon; Center: Zack Wise, Ead Alsammani, Sonji Pender, James Webb, Jeremy Enfinger, and Randy Holler; Back: Kenneth Newsome, Shawn Collins, Alan Gevara, Jacob Patterson, Dennie Matthews, and Joe Hinson.

WCC Nuclear Technology Students Tour Plant Farley

Students in the Wallace Community College Nuclear Technology Program recently visited the Southern Nuclear Facility – Plant Farley as part of their training. The students are in the final courses of the five-semester program. Michael Hannon, Nuclear Technology Instructor, accompanied the students on the tour.

The Nuclear Technology Program began at WCC in 2010 in response to a request from the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI), which was starting a program with two-year community colleges across the country to create tech training programs in areas served by nuclear generation facilities. The colleges partner with energy companies in their area, in this case the Southern Company which owns Southern Nuclear. The NEI established the curriculum to assure that graduates of the program would bring consistent training to tech jobs within the industry. Wallace was one of two colleges chosen to begin a nuclear technology program with Southern Nuclear.

The program got off the ground with a Department of Labor grant, which enabled the College to purchase trainers, computers, and other equipment. The grant also funds the nuclear technology instructor, a data tracking specialist, and a skills mentor for the program.

"Southern Company is very proud to partner with Wallace Community College, and with the nuclear industry in the Nuclear Uniform Curriculum (NUCP). NUCP is a standardized Associate Degree program, aimed to educate operators and technicians for jobs at nuclear facilities," said Nora Swanson, Coordinator, Workforce Development, Southern Nuclear. "The program provides students with an accelerated pathway into our industry. Currently, only about 38 colleges across the nation have partnered with the nuclear industry to implement the program," she said.

Plant Farley employees regularly attend classes in the nuclear technology program to give input and advice to assure that students are learning the skills required by the curriculum. They also serve on the program advisory council and participate in monthly conference calls with WCC personnel.

The curriculum of the program separates the hundreds of skills utilized in the nuclear field into specific classes. Successful nuclear technicians must possess strong communication and analytical skills, mechanical aptitude, good computer skills, the ability to read and interpret service manuals, an interest in keeping abreast of new technology, and a special desire to learn new service and repair procedures. Students will graduate with basic skills to prepare them for positions as electrical, mechanical, and non-licensed operation positions in the nuclear industry.

It is anticipated that Southern Nuclear will need about 800 new personnel to staff two new reactors when they go live in 2016. Nuclear technology graduates will be trained to fill some of these positions, as well as those in existing plants due to retirement and company growth.

Swanson agrees with the analysis of the future of the nuclear industry. "With the resurgence of new nuclear development these graduates are ready to enter the industry at a very exciting time. The NUCP program highlights what industry and education can do when we partner together to build a strong local community pipeline for our next generation of workers," she said.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median pay for nuclear technicians in 2010 was \$32.73 per hour. Overall employment of technicians is projected to grow by 14 percent from 2010 to 2020 because of greater demand for nuclear energy.

Thirteen students who began classes in fall 2010 will graduate this summer, and will be eligible for certification with the NEI.

For additional information about the Nuclear Technology Program contact Debi Breedlove at dbreedlove@wallace.edu, or call 334-556-2224. Fall semester registration for classes is August 16-17. WCC admission applications are available online at www.wallace.edu/enrollment. Students may begin the enrollment process early to save time.

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