

## Re-Entry Student Travels the World Maintaining Automated Equipment

When Will Bedell was passed up for a promotion while working at a winery, he became determined to go back to school to earn the certification needed for advancement. He attended College of the Sequoias (COS) for two years while working full time and earned Certificates of Achievement in both Industrial Maintenance Technology and Industrial Automation. COS connected him with employment and now he has a rewarding career traveling all over the world.

Bedell graduated from Paso Robles High School and later relocated to Tulare County. He initially planned on a fire fighting career. He became an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), worked on contract and was a volunteer firefighter for five years.

Then, he changed careers to find more consistent work as a mechanic at a winery. As he expanded his knowledge, he moved to another winery and developed more skills in facilities maintenance. That's when he hit a roadblock that was a pivotal moment for him. "I was passed over for a position that I was qualified for because I didn't have the education required," said Bedell. "That motivated me to go to COS to get the certification needed to advance my career."

As a re-entry student with nearly a decade of work experience, Bedell had opportunities to share his knowledge while gaining new skills. "One of the challenges of not being in school for so long was getting in the swing of studying and preparing for tests," said Bedell. "Both my industrial maintenance and automation instructors must have seen my potential. I soon became a teacher's aide and enjoyed using my creative efforts to help others and make a positive impact."

According to Bedell, one of the advantages of COS is that the faculty members were well connected with local industry and had vast knowledge that they were willing to share. "When I was curious, my teachers always took the time to respond to my questions," said Bedell. "Our discussions frequently went beyond the curriculum into advanced topics."

The practical aspect of the COS industrial programs appealed to Bedell. "There was a good balance of lecture and real world experience," said Bedell. "I appreciated that much of the class was taught through hands-on learning. We did a lot of welding, electrical wiring, troubleshooting and programming automated controls. And, that's just a small portion of what was covered."

With support from the COS, Bedell was able to find complementary work while attending college. "Lisette Conway in Career Services was very helpful," said Bedell. "Lisette worked with me on my resume and helped me prepare for interviews. She told me about using the STAR system to answer employment questions." STAR stands for describing the situation, task, action and result.





Meeting a prospective employer twice in one day through COS may have given Bedell the edge to win an industrial maintenance position. “I had a morning interview with Leprino Foods, the largest cheese manufacturer in the USA,” said Bedell. “That evening, COS hosted Entrée to Employment, a sit-down meal where employers can see students in a different light. During the meal, employers make brief presentations and take students’ questions. I was able to connect with the representatives from Leprino Foods, that I’d met in the morning interview, again that evening and ended up getting a job offer.”

Bedell was able to support himself by working full time while attending COS. “I would highly recommend COS,” said Bedell. “The college offers choice curriculum and has top notch connections with industry. I earned Certificates of Achievement in both Industrial Maintenance Technology and Industrial Automation in two years. I appreciated getting placed in a good quality job while in school and stayed with Leprino Food for another year after graduating.”

Even after graduation, COS’s Lisette Conway, CTE Career Services, stays in touch with students. “When the Field Service Technician position came up with Exeter Engineering, I shared that out to our alumni students,” said Conway. “Will jumped at the opportunity and got the job. He has been able to travel a lot with this role and seems to love it. I so enjoy seeing Will's career updates on LinkedIn and stay in touch when I can.”

At Exeter Engineering, a company that designs and supplies produce packaging equipment for agricultural and food processing industries, Bedell enjoys his career as a Field Service Technician. “I thrive on troubleshooting and solving technical problems for our customers,” said Bedell. “Each customer is unique and I like figuring out how to optimize our equipment for their needs. I have a passion for advancing my knowledge and understanding how things work to make them better.”

One of the benefits of the job is travel. “I like the varying schedule and ability to travel,” said Bedell. “I’ve been to Canada, Mexico, South Africa and all over the United States to help our customers.”

The support from COS has been instrumental in his career success. “The staff at COS is top notch,” said Bedell. “I’ve never been supported as much as I was at COS. The COS Career Services Center went as far as partnering with JC Penny to provide students with suits appropriate for interviews. And, as part of the maintenance program, the college gave us tools to get us started in our careers. I still use the multimeter I received to measure AC/DC voltage, DC current and resistance; it has been to South Africa and back.”