

Willems, Bonnie M.

From: Amy Kox <amy.kox@nwtc.edu>
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To: Willems, Bonnie M.
Subject: Latest Updates from UECN – February 2023

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Building a Skilled Energy Workforce Together

February 2023 E-Newsletter

Official newsletter of the
Utilities and Energy
Coordination Network –
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Grant Updates

UECN ATE Microsite

For current program information, past newsletters, training opportunities, and more check out UECN's microsite: <https://ate.is/UECN>

Frontier Community College and NWTC Partner to Start New Gas Utility and Construction program

Since 2005, the national gas industry has never seen a higher need for a skilled workforce. Technical Colleges can fulfill this gap and provide a continuous feed to fill positions. Knowing this, NWTC applied for and was awarded the Utilities and Energy

Coordination Network grant with a goal to increase training programs and provide skilled workers in the utility industry.

Frontier College

Established in 1976, Frontier Community College (FCC) is in Fairfield, Illinois. FCC is one of four campuses (along with Lincoln Trail College, Olney Central College, and Wabash Valley College) comprising Illinois Eastern Community Colleges.

Studies found that utility workers prefer to work near where they currently live. Tom Hebert, Gas Utility instructor, and UECN member Jack Tribe, Centuri Group, Inc., worked to find a college that might be interested in starting a Gas Utility program. Frontier College in southern Illinois was mentioned as a possibility. After conversations and an in-person campus visit, Frontier's Associate Dean agreed. The program was presented to their leadership and a new Gas Utility program was approved. With a proposed start of fall 2024, NWTC has shared 40% of their curriculum with more to follow. Because of this success, NWTC is in a unique position to share curriculum and recruiting efforts to assist others in starting their own program.

If you are interested in starting your own Gas Utility program, contact **Howard Herrild**, NWTC Associate Dean, or **Tom Hebert**, Gas Utility Instructor. Check out <https://ate.is/UECN> for current recruiting efforts and curriculum.

NWTC Gas Utility and Construction Program

Besides having a strong curriculum and a solid reputation for graduating skilled workers, three class sections are set up to fit student schedules. The weekend section allows students already in the workforce to continue to work and attend classes. It also allows students the opportunity to take Electrical Power Distribution program classes Monday through Thursday and then graduate with degrees in both EPD and Gas after nine months.

This year, NWTC's Gas Utility and Construction program will graduate 39 students on March 6. Of the 22 weekend students, nine have jobs waiting for them when they graduate, five of these are engineering technician positions where they will design gas and electric projects.

Gas Utility Program:

- 9-month technical diploma
- \$56,984 average starting salary
- 83% graduate employment

Three Class Sections:

- Monday – Thursday, 7:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
- Monday – Thursday, 12:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
- Friday – Saturday, 7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
- *Additional time may be needed to complete general studies classes*

Partnership Work:

A **career fair** will be held at NWTC's Great Lakes Energy Education Center on February 23-24 with the Spring Advisory Committee meeting on February 24. For more information, contact **Tom Hebert**.

Local utilities and contractors adjust worker schedules to allow them to work and attend weekend classes. Contact **Tom Hebert** to learn more.

This and That

Solar Energy Technology

As NWTC's solar energy program evolves with the goals of providing employers an up-to-date skilled workforce, we are developing two new four-credit courses that are part of the Solar Energy Technology Associate Degree. They are:

- Solar, Storage, & EV Charging
- PV Monitoring and Troubleshooting

Going hand-in-hand with these new courses, NWTC received an Energy Innovation Grant that provides for a new energy storage system for the Great Lakes Energy Education Center.



We are also hoping for more Energy Innovation Grant funding to get the building to NET ZERO, offsetting all electrical and natural gas equivalent energy. This project, providing student hands-on experience would consist of a PV carport, more energy storage, and several EV charging stations, with infrastructure for high-speed charging.

Energy Management

This semester, the Energy Management Technology students kick off their work with the City of Green Bay. Students will provide a comprehensive energy audit of three fire department buildings. We are partnering with UECN member, Slipstream, and the City of Green Bay to provide these audits. This service learning project allows students to use data logging, infrared imaging, blower door testing, and building energy simulation skills on a real-life project.

Electrical Power Distribution

Representatives from NWTC's Electrical Power Distribution (EPD) and Apprenticeship programs recently attended the Electric Operations Conference and Expo. At our booth, we answered questions from employers about the EPD and Apprenticeship programs. As part of the event, 12 NWTC Line Worker Apprenticeship students received certificates of completion at the utility programs' graduation ceremony.

Telecommunications

- **Federal and State Collaboration Being Planned:** NWTC is in the early stages of planning a workforce development conference and event for fall 2023. This conference will invite speakers from the fiber optic, wireless, and broadband industries throughout the Midwest and nationwide. Policy makers, installers, engineers, designers, manufacturers, suppliers, and industry experts will be invited to discuss ways to successfully fill the telecom industry worker shortage.
- The Telecommunications program continues to see interest and student enrollment increases. Career fairs, commercials, and social media events are bringing awareness of the rewarding careers in telecommunications.
- Fiber optic kits, assembled to give potential students a hands-on opportunity to learn about fiber optic cable transmits data, allow our career coaches the opportunity to showcase the Telecom program on a wider scale.



Gas Utility Construction and Service

The Gas Utility Spring Advisory Committee meeting will be held February 24 at the Great Lakes Energy Education Center on the NWTC Green Bay campus to discuss proposed changes to the curriculum that were suggested after compiling results from the survey completed last year.

Gas Utility and Electrical Power Distribution Commencement

You are invited to attend the Gas Utility and Electrical Power Distribution Open House and Commencement on Wednesday, March 6, on the [NWTC Green Bay campus](#). The [Great Lakes Energy Education Center](#) open house starts at 3:00 p.m. with commencement at 5:00 in the Student Center Commons. Closing remarks are at 6:00 with a reception to follow.

Upcoming Trainings and Seminars

For the latest in training and seminars, visit:

- **NWTC Corporate Training and Economic Development (CTED):** Training and services tailored to individual company needs.
- **Center for Renewable Energy Advanced Technological Education (CREATE):** Creating a skilled technical workforce to implement the transformation of the world's energy industries.
- **Slipstream:** Discovers, tests, and scales climate solutions in buildings and communities.
- **Interstate Renewable Energy Council (IREC):** Committed to a clean energy future that is dependable, resilient, and equitable.
- **Midwest Energy Association (MEA):** Empowering the energy industry through education, leadership development, and industry connections.
- **Midwest Renewable Energy Association (MREA):** Promotes renewable energy and sustainable living through education and demonstration.
- **Environmental and Natural Resources Technology (EARTH) – formerly Advanced Technology Environmental Education Center (ATTEC):** Advances environmental and natural resources education through curriculum, professional, and program development.

To have your training opportunities listed, email bonnie.willems@nwtc.edu.

Connect With Us

Visit our website: nwtc.edu/EnergyNetwork

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