

# Oregon-Columbia Foundation Contributions Pave the Way for Future Workforce

Contributions to the Oregon-Columbia Chapter Foundation have the ability to impact lives and programs such as ACE Academy.

By Zoya Kumar, AGC Membership Services Specialist

An AGC Oregon-Columbia Chapter Foundation grant recipient OBC Academy for Architecture, Construction and Engineering (ACE Academy or ACE) has finished in its first year strong, according to an independent evaluation report commissioned by the ACE Board of Directors and required by ACE's charter agreement.

ACE is a public, tuition-free charter school sponsored by The Oregon Building Congress in partnership with Centennial, Gresham-Barlow, Parkrose, and Reynold School Districts. ACE offers a math, science, English, and technical skills curriculum delivered in an integrated, hands-on setting. Industry partnerships are essential to students' experiences.

Karen Phillips, instructional coach/school-to-career coordinator at Sabin Schellenberg Professional Technical Center, is a 20-year education veteran who executed the evaluation report using assessment tools which included focus groups; interviews of staff, parents, and training center partners; online surveys; and daily observations.

## Highlights of the report:

- Students rated their educational experience at 4.0 and their career

preparation a 4.1 on a 5 point scale, noting that ACE was more rigorous than their home high school programs.

- Student GPAs were higher than their cumulative incoming GPAs. The hands-on contextual learning has re-engaged their individual learning. Of the 94 juniors enrolled at the end of the '08-'09 school year, 87 of them are returning.

- ACE's staff is dedicated and committed—capable of implementing the school's vision for a hands-on, project-based career charter school.

- Parents gave ACE high ratings for its first year: 8.4 out of 10, with extremely complimentary remarks during phone interviews ("He loves it" was a common reaction about their child's experience at ACE).

- ACE demonstrated an unusual level of implementation of school design for a first-year new school. This is most likely attributed to strong, supportive leadership, a clear vision, and a qualified and committed staff.

"ACE Academy had a very successful first year, and the credit goes in large part to a dedicated and professional teaching staff that embraced the vision and delivered it to students. This vision



Ace Academy students at work.

was created by a team of industry and education partners who knew that kids will learn when you combine real work with high expectations delivered in a hands-on learning environment. This innovative and so far successful model is possible because of the professional and financial support of industry partners like AGC. The supplies, tools, materials, and professional expertise of the industry partners are all outside the funding levels of the public schools; without this help ACE would not function," stated Mike Taylor, ACE director.

At the time of print, over 180 juniors and seniors from six local high schools kicked off the second year of ACE Academy.

As evident in ACE's first year evaluation, contributions to the Oregon-Columbia Chapter Foundation have the ability to impact lives and programs. **AGC**

*For more information on how to donate to the AGC Oregon-Columbia Chapter Foundation, please visit the foundation's website: [www.agc-oregon.org/agcfoundation](http://www.agc-oregon.org/agcfoundation).*

"As a member of the foundation, I am especially excited at the work students are accomplishing at the ACE Academy. Recently I had the opportunity to observe presentations by ACE students describing the commercial development of a piece of property near the Lloyd Center. These presentations were thorough, thoughtful, ingenious, and descriptive of the skills the students learned this past year. I was left with three thoughts: first, the ACE Academy is a homerun; second, I saw the beginnings of a

professionalism last witnessed sitting through selection interviews for architects at the Gresham-Barlow School District; and finally, these young people represent the best of our future, whether they go on to pursue educations in engineering, architecture, or the opportunities of the crafts. They will become leaders in the field of their choosing. The construction industry will be well served by these outstanding, well prepared young people." Dale Campbell, AGC Oregon-Columbia Chapter Foundation President.