

08
FEBRUARY
2022

FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

AT COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

FM WEEKLY
COMMUNICATION

Issue 153

Greetings, FM Team.

Last summer I visited all the FM sections and groups to talk about how FM is responding to the feedback received from the 2018 employee climate survey. One of the programs in development at that time was the Utility Plant Technician Trainee Program. I'd like to provide an update of that process for you today.

The program was designed by FM employees Gene Ellis, Mike Broadbent, and Mike Mahony as a collaboration between Utility Services and the FM HR Office. The Remote Boilers and Chiller (RBC) Shop, part of Utility Services, has over 100 individual pieces of boiler and chiller equipment to care for, and needs experienced technicians in both areas. Filling the technician positions in the traditional way was not successful, so this program was developed as a creative solution for recruiting employees who can then gain the qualifications on the job rather than needing to have them prior to employment.

Mike Broadbent shared that setting up this program "is really exciting and groundbreaking for our department. It gives entry level people a chance to learn a trade skill. We built salary movement into the plan from apprentice to shop lead. If they can achieve the criteria, they get the in-range movement or promotion!" It is a four-year apprentice program that consists of on-the-job hours plus online course work with hvacredu.net. When completed the apprentice will be NATE (North American Technician Excellence) certified and will specialize in chiller or boiler operation and maintenance.

This past fall, a search committee reviewed 44 applications. Eight people were interviewed with three positions filled. All three candidates started this January, one who was already a member of our FM team.

Timeline and Milestones

Within the first six months of the program, the apprentice will need to receive a NATE Ready to Work certificate. Within a minimum of two years, the apprentice will need to complete the NATE Core service exam. The next phase will be specific to one field of expertise. There will be either a chiller or boiler emphasis, and our trainees will choose one or the other path, based on individual talents, business need, and mentor feedback. For the chiller path, the apprentice will need to pass the NATE Commercial Refrigeration exam. The boiler path will include passing the NATE Gas Hydronics exam. They will also need NATE certified hands-on experience. This final phase will take a minimum of two years. After successful completion, the individuals will be NATE certified and advance to Utility Plant Operator I.

Strong mentorship is a keystone of this program. There are two State Classified Hourly (former RBC employees) who will be mentors; one for boiler expertise and the other for chiller expertise. This includes technical leadership, as well as how to give good customer service and how to be a part of an effective team.

The RBC shop has committed to sustainable excellence with a clear development plan and defined goals for the incoming apprentices. I'm looking forward to the shop's growth over the next few years. Join me in wishing them the best of luck!



Tom Satterly, P.E.
Associate Vice President for Facilities Management

<https://www.fm.colostate.edu/fmNews>
fac_news@mail.colostate.edu