

SHASTA COLLEGE CTE ACADEMIES PROVIDE *Deeper Connection*

In 2021, Jay Davis, faculty member of Shasta College's Welding Technology program asked: How can we better engage and serve more local high school students while providing them with meaningful experiences? The journey to find answers has involved years of collaboration among various stakeholders, including high school partners, faculty, administrators, and students.



What started as a grassroots initiative has evolved into a sustainable and effective recruitment model. Funded by the Strong Workforce Program and led by Interim CTE Outreach Coordinator Sarabeth Angel-Towner, regular 1-day CTE Academies foster a deeper connection to a variety of pathways for high school students in the Far North. Academies are designed around hands-on learning experiences and engage

small groups (10-15) on the main campus with expert faculty. Shasta College's CTE Academy first started with Davis' welding program and now includes the Diesel Technology, Automotive Technology, Machining, and Early Childhood Education programs.

To date, over 640 high school students have participated in over 80 CTE Academies, including students identifying as justice-involved, female, and neurodiverse. In addition, program faculty consistently report recognizing at least two to four prior CTE Academy students every semester in their classes. While Shasta College has quantitative data from student survey respondents, sometimes qualitative data supports the "why" in a more significant way.

What are students saying about their experiences? One remarked, "It was cool to actually do things myself!" Another shared, "I loved how in-depth the teacher was and how he explained everything and was always there to help." High school coordinators and chaperones have echoed these sentiments, stating, "We have loved our CTE Academy experiences! Our students have been exposed to so many amazing pathways," and "I love the hands-on experience and the positive atmosphere. [The faculty] put nervous students at ease and helped them feel capable."

Through these academies, students are creating, problem-solving, and acquiring new skills. The personal connections with faculty, along with the opportunity to see facilities and interact with equipment, help dispel fears and misconceptions about life after high school. Students are actively engaged, asking questions, having fun, and often letting their guard down to discover that college isn't intimidating.

A key message is that Shasta College offers incredible resources, including dedicated staff and faculty, to support and encourage students in whatever path they choose to pursue. Shasta College's CTE programs and faculty will continue hosting CTE Academies each semester, expanding the model and serving the local community and students. The college's career and technical education team's mission includes removing the "either/or" and "less than" narratives around students pursuing CTE pathways and with each CTE Academy, we are showing the students that CTE is for everyone!

