

Blue Mountain
Community
College
Central Oregon
Community
College
Chemeketa
Community
College
Clackamas
Community
College

Lane
Community
College

Clatsop
Community
College
Klamath
Community
College
Lane Community
College
Linn Benton
Community
College
Mt. Hood

Community
College
Oregon Coast
Community
College
Portland
Community
College
Rogue
Community
College
Southwestern
Oregon

Community
College
Tillamook Bay
Community
College
Treasure Valley
Community
College
Umpqua
Community
College

Pepper Smelser

After Pepper Smelser received her lay off notice in 2008, she knew she needed to return to school to develop new job skills. Although she had refined her planning and organizational skills during 28 years as a “traffic” manager at a Northwest television station—ensuring that programming ran on time and was continuous, whether a TV program, a commercial or a public service announcement—she says the saturated broadcasting market offered few job possibilities.

Now, two years later, Smelser has a full-time position with benefits in the medical records department at PeaceHealth.

Smelser, 57, says she qualified for the position thanks to Lane Community College’s Health Records Technology curriculum and the on-campus Workforce Network, a program

designed to help displaced workers choose new careers and obtain training.

Although she is still a novice in her profession, Smelser says her coursework in medical terminology, medical transcription, and medical office assistance, and an internship at Peace Health, gave her a definite edge for obtaining employment in the health care industry. The internship in the medical records department “gives the student exposure to what actually goes on in the workplace,” Smelser says.

Smelser said she benefited from study groups with other HRT students, most of whom were in her age group and also preparing for another line of employment.

“I don’t know where I would be without them,” she says of the five women in her study group, three of



them now employed. Like Smelser, they took advantage of Lane’s Co-operative Education internship program at Peace Health.

With the guidance and support she received from instructors, advisors and new friends, Smelser says she found it easier to set new goals and earn good grades. “I loved going to Lane,” she says, recalling how she was indifferent to academics as a high school student.



260 13th Street NE • Salem, Oregon 97301 • 503-399-9912 • www.occa17.com

Community Colleges provide powerful solutions for Oregon's future!