

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

Umpqua  
Community  
College

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

# Tom McNamara

Tom McNamara is frank to admit that he was “traumatized” when he lost his job at a boat manufacturing plant in Roseburg and “nervous and stressed” about the prospect of going back to school after 20 years doing production work.

By contrast, his two years at Umpqua Community College was a “big success for me.” In June of 2010, he received an associate of applied science degree in civil engineering/surveying after two years of work and study and a 3.81 grade point average. That led to a job in his field of study with the local office of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) where he is a civil engineering technician.

“My job went away in March 2008, right before spring break,” McNamara said. “My wife pushed me to go back to school, but I didn’t think I could do it,” said the 42-year-old father of a boy and a girl, both teenagers. “I chose to work

extra hard (at his UCC classes) because of my children.”

“Everyone at UCC helped me to see the picture – the people in financial aid and the registrar’s office,” he said. “I was scared to go back (to school). (Counselor) Sue Windsor had faith I could do it. The instructors: couldn’t ask for anything better. As long as you’re willing to show the effort, they’ll bend over backwards.”

While still in school, one instructor, Brent Knapp, helped him get an internship with the BLM as a surveying aide on the coast where he worked fulltime for the summer. This past spring, he worked one day a week at his present job while taking classes fulltime. In his present job, now fulltime, he designs logging roads and helps put together timber sales. He uses the auto cad, excel spread sheets, engineering and surveying that he became adept with at UCC.



McNamara said that the instructors “made the transition easy” for someone who had been doing production work for the preceding 20 years. “I had the work ethic,” he said. “I needed to open my brain. They helped me be successful.” In addition to engineering instructors, who had the ability to translate from work to school, he extols such core courses as the math program and English teacher Melinda Benton whom he said was “exceptional.”