Chemeketa Community College

Chemeketa Community College (CCC) had its beginnings as the Salem Technical-Vocational School (STVS), an extension of the Salem School District. Established in the 1950s, STVS offered training in such fields as practical nursing and electronics engineering. In 1964, the school moved to Lancaster Avenue, the present site of CCC. A year later, STVS was renamed the Salem Technical Community College. In the 1960s, leaders from the mid-Willamette Valley lobbied for a comprehensive community college to serve the growing educational needs of the area. Chemeketa Community College was born from those efforts.

The name “Chemeketa Community College” was chosen among those submitted in a naming contest. “Chemeketa” derives from a Native American word that may mean “place of peace” or “gathering place.” The name seemed appropriate, since the college was located on a site where Native American tribes of the Willamette Valley had come together for councils. In 1969, the Board of Education approved the name, and Chemeketa Community College officially opened the next year.

Enrollment at CCC grew from around 1,100 in the 1970s to over 56,000 in 2009, making it the second largest community college in Oregon. The college provides comprehensive post-secondary education for residents of Marion and Polk counties, as well as those who live in parts of Yamhill and Linn counties. CCC offers over forty professional and technical programs and a wide range of transfer courses.

Most of the major buildings at CCC were constructed from the mid-1970s through the early 1980s. Buildings have been added since, including a 72,000-square-foot Learning Resource Center and a Technology Classroom Building that houses fourteen computer labs. On September 11, 2002, the Peace Garden was dedicated at the main campus, a place for remembrance and reflection and a reminder of the origins of Chemeketa’s name.

In addition to the main campus in Salem, CCC operates several campuses and centers. The McMinnville campus opened in 1974 to serve Yamhill County. The Woodburn Campus offers credit and noncredit classes and is an official GED testing site. Polk County has been served by the Dallas Center since 1976. The Brooks Center is home to the Regional Training Center, which specializes in public safety training and includes a four-story burn tower, a five-story rescue tower, and a retention pond for dive-rescue training. In 2003, CCC opened the Northwest Viticulture Center at its Eola site in west Salem. The vineyard management, winemaking, and wine-marketing programs are some of the more unusual offerings at CCC.

CCC continues to grow and expand its services through Adult Basic Education, credit classes, on-line classes, and training and adult-learning programs.

Written by Joan Jagodnik

Further Reading:

A History of Chemeketa Community College, Salem, Ore.: Office of College Advancement, 2003.

Chemeketa Community College. “History.” *Chemeketa Community College.* http://www.chemek.cc.or.us/aboutus/whoweare/history.html

Moisan, Melaney. "Salem Online History: Chemeketa Community College." *City of Salem.* http://iwa.cityofsalem.net/salemhistory/education/chemeketa_community_college.ht

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