Program Teaches How To Run Equipment

The Associated Press

MONROE, La. (AP) — Louisiana Delta Community College and ANGUS Chemical Co. started a "process technology" program at Delta five years ago to keep the plant in northwest Louisiana.

Director Jackie Johnson says graduates of the two-year program now typically start at $60,000 a year, working 15 days a month. the News-Star (http://tnsne.ws/x0CGNb)

"I don't know anywhere else where you can make that kind of money after a two-year investment and also have 14 days off every month," she said. "It sounds too good to be true, but it isn't."

Students in the associate degree program learn to operate, maintain and troubleshoot manufacturing equipment that can be used at a variety of different plants, including chemical, oil refinery, power generation and pulp and paper.

"As a process operator, which is their job title, they are the ones that keep these million-dollar plants up and running," Johnson said.

Six other colleges and one university in Louisiana offer programs endorsed by The North American Process Technology Alliance. Delta's is the only one north of the Baton Rouge area.

NAPTA says others are at Baton Rouge Community College Baton Rouge and ITI Technical College in Baton Rouge, Louisiana Technical College-Ascension Sorrento, LTI River Parishes, Nunez Community College in Chalmette, and two Lake Charles schools: Sowela Technical Community College and McNeese State University.

In the past year' Delta's program has grown from 40 students to about 140.

Women make up less than 5 percent of the students. "I want to dispel the misconception that this is an all-male field," Johnson said.

Delta is holding an evening program Tuesday to show off the program. Representatives from its corporate sponsors will share information about the field and possibly offer employment and summer internships.

Graduates will be available to speak about their experience and answer questions.

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