

College of the Canyons and SCV Water Partner to Produce the Next Wave of Water Industry Professionals

Over the last 20 years or so, College of the Canyons (COC) has instructed thousands of students in Water Systems Technology (WST), preparing them for a career in the water industry.

SCV Water relies on this talent pool to add to and strengthen their workforce. Current employees can advance their career or earn continuing education credits required to renew State certifications for water treatment and distribution. New students have the opportunity to find employment as distribution operators, water treatment plant operators, water service representatives, water quality specialists, wastewater collection workers and/or wastewater treatment operators.

Our very own Director of Operations and Maintenance, Mike Alvord, is the chair of the WST Advisory Board. Comprised of staff from various water and wastewater entities and some of the program's adjunct professors, this group discusses program improvements, available jobs and internships, and other program-related opportunities.

Within the last 10 years, the program has grown substantially with a variety class offerings and formats. Day and night classes are offered in a variety of formats, such as traditional (in-person), hybrid (in-person and online) or all online.

TRAINING THE NEXT WAVE

All of the WST courses are taught by experienced instructors and working industry professionals (adjunct professors), including some of our very own SCV Water staff! They bring relevancy and real-life experience into the classroom and ensure that the curriculum aligns with what is happening in the industry.

Mike Alvord Director of Operations and Maintenance

Mike has worked in the water industry for 22 years, beginning in water quality and working his way into operations.

For the past 20 years, Mike has been an instructor at COC. He began teaching in 1998, replacing former CLWA Board Member, Bill Pecsí, as a professor. When the program was in its early stages, Mike also taught with Steve McLean, a former Principal Engineer at CLWA.



During his teaching career, Mike has also taught through the CA/NV – American Water Works Association, L.A. Department of Water and Power (LADWP) and Cal State University, Northridge.

Mike likes helping others in the industry advance their careers. “I just like the college atmosphere and learning about each student and their reasons for taking classes is very

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interesting. Students want to be there.” He added, “I also admire students who have full-time jobs, families, or other commitments, and still take the time to better themselves by taking classes.”

During the 2018/19 school year, Mike will be taking his first (and probably much needed) hiatus. SCV Water’s Senior Electrical Technician, Marcel Margheritis, has stepped up to teach this year. During the Fall 2018 semester, Marcel will be teaching **Water 030: Waterworks Mathematics**.

Cris Perez **Director of Technology Services**

Cris’ background in environmental science and education prepared him to teach at COC. He has spent much of his career focusing on teaching ecology, understanding environmental laws and regulations, as well as water rights, diversion, and operations. In his current position, Cris has shifted his focus to technology.



If you’ve met Cris, you know he’s a people person. He likes teaching because he enjoys the energy of the classroom and likes helping people learn. Over the course of his career, he’s learned to have a lot of patience and an understanding that everyone learns differently.

Cris shares his background with students to show that whatever their prior experience or knowledge, it can be a stepping stone to new things. He says, “What makes this experience unique is that we are able to open the eyes of some students who had different career paths in mind. We are able to show them the water industry as a potential career.”

Cris began as an adjunct professor at COC during the Spring 2018 semester, and is scheduled to teach **Water 035: Water Quality** again next spring.

Ryan Bye **Water Quality/Regulatory Compliance Supervisor**

Ryan will begin his first formal teaching venture at COC during the Fall 2018 semester, but he’s been helping others study for their certification exams for years.

During his 14-plus years in the water industry, Ryan has accumulated a wide variety of experience to prepare him to teach. He started as a field customer service representative and has done everything from maintenance to water quality to becoming a Senior Production Operator. Currently, he is SCV Water’s Water Quality/Regulatory Compliance Supervisor.



Ryan received his A.S. in WST from College of the Canyons. “There were some really great instructors who helped me in my career. I would like to have the same impact in other people’s lives.” He added, “I get excited seeing other people find a love for the water industry.”

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Not only does Ryan want to help his students: “I feel there is a huge responsibility to provide students with the training they need to succeed at work, in changing careers, and in preparing for State exams.” He hopes this experience will grow him as well: “I hope to become a better communicator through teaching and that it will help keep information fresh so I don’t forget it.”

Ryan’s enthusiasm is infectious and he is going to bring a lot to the Water Systems Technology program. Fall 2018 semester, Ryan will be teaching **Water 040 and 041: Water Distribution Operator I and II**.

WRITING THE BOOK(S)

After a sudden price increase made the book for 030 – Intro to Waterworks Mathematics cost-prohibitive for many students, so Mike decided to write his own textbook. With the help and encouragement of Regina Blasberg, COC WST Department Chair, he started writing textbooks for all of the WST classes.

Since then, Mike has written and revised more than five textbooks for the program. Additionally, former SCV Water, Water Resources Planner, Stephanie Anagnoson has written textbooks for Water 020: Intro to Water Systems Technology and Water 032: Water Supply.

Also, our very own Water Treatment Operator, Vincent Titiriga, wrote the Water 050: Water Treatment Plant Operator Processes I textbook this past April, which is available to use during the Fall 2018 semester.

“They were able to write the texts through the assistance of grant funds,” stated Regina. “We received a Zero Textbook Cost (ZTC) Grant. It allowed us to develop Open Educational Resource (OER) textbooks for the remaining courses in the program.”

All 11 program textbooks are available and free to students. COC’s WST program is the first career education program in the State to provide 100% OER content.

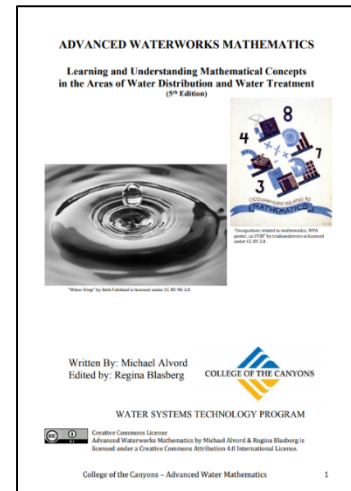
ADVANCE YOUR CAREER

If you’re considering jumping into the WST Program, the following are just some of the SCV Water staff whom have taken courses for continuing education and/or have completed the program. Ask them about their experience, then take advantage of the SCV Water **Education Reimbursement Program**. The WST program is eligible for reimbursement. Please contact Linda Pointer in Human Resources at lpointer@scvwa.org or 661-513-1271 for more details about WST or other academic programs.

Associate of Science (A.S.) Degree / Certificate of Achievement

- Adam Vital, Production Operator II *
- Brad Baker, Water Quality Technician
- Brandon Zvara, Water Treatment Operator
- Ryan Bye, Water Quality/Regulatory Compliance Supervisor
- Tim Kasparian, Utility Worker I *
- Vincent Titiriga, Water Treatment Operator

* Also career advancement / continuing education



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Career Advancement / Continuing Education

- Corey Jens, Field Customer Service Rep I
- Jarred Frey, Utility Worker I
- John Foote, Senior Field Customer Service Rep
- Jenny Anderson, Water Quality Specialist
- Nick Gilmore, Field Customer Service Rep I
- Pete Woeger, Senior Instrumentation Technician
- R.J. Huish, Production Operator II

For more information on **COC's Water Systems Technology Program**, visit:
www.canyons.edu/Water

If you are interested in **teaching**, please reach out to:

Regina Blasberg, MS
Water Systems Technology – Department Chair
Regina.Blasberg@canyons.edu
(661) 362-5096



“You’d Been Learned”

In Mike’s early days of teaching, he recalls: My very first class at LADWP was tough. There were engineers and guys who had been in the industry for much longer than me. They all knew a heck of a lot more than me, too.

I remember the first day; the class was a little rowdy to start. This “drill sergeant” looking guy came in and yelled at the class to be quiet and give their attention and respect to me. I later found out he was one of the main supervisors for the group.

At the end of the eight-week course the guys gave me a sweatshirt that said “You’d Been Learned” and on the back it said “Podunk Water Company”. They warmed up to me and we had a great time together and learned a lot from each other.