

Attracting and Recruiting Survey Technicians through a College Connection

Contributed by Loyalist College

For Ontario Land Surveyors striving to keep pace with rapid changes in the industry, there is mounting pressure to attract and retain highly skilled workers. Among the most in-demand positions are land survey technicians, survey engineering technicians, draftspersons, and survey assistants.

Surveyors are always looking for candidates who can leverage the latest technology to help them gain a competitive advantage. However, finding the right people with the right experience and training for the job has become increasingly difficult.

The pool of land survey technologists and technicians has decreased, as the baby boomer population retires. Concerns about a looming labour shortage have many organizations scrambling to recruit new talent to help them expand and enhance their services, necessary for growth and prosperity.

One of the best sources of new talent for these roles is a community college, such as Loyalist College in Belleville, Ontario, which offers a two-year Survey Technician program. While it is the only Survey Technician diploma program in Ontario, survey technicians may graduate from a number of post-secondary programs, including Civil Engineering Technician/Technology and Construction Engineering Technician. Most of them go on to become Certified Technicians with the Ontario Association of Certified Engineering Technicians and Technologists (OACETT).

An excellent way for surveyors to meet tomorrow's professional, skilled workforce is by establishing a partnership with an Ontario college. As employers, surveyors



Loyalist College Civil Engineering Technician students Patrick Prusak and Mason Tolhoek, and Survey Technician student Philip Moss.

benefit from the practical skills students have learned in the classroom and through on-the-job-training, which can be completed in their organization. The work placement benefits both students and employers, who receive help in an office or field setting one day per week for a semester. While placements often transition into permanent employment, the opportunity allows a surveyor to try a person in a position, without having to make a long-term commitment to the student.

“We’ve had Loyalist Survey Technician students do placements here for decades,” said Robert Harris, a partner at Gifford Harris Surveying Ltd. in Trenton, Ontario. “It’s a win-win situation because the students help us out while they get hands-on experience. We have hired several Survey Technician graduates in the past, plus we have an employee who graduated from the Environmental Resources program at Loyalist who has worked here for many years.”

Through a combination of classroom instruction, practical field exercises and data processing with the latest

MicroSurvey CAD computer software, Survey Technician graduates gain the skills surveyors require. The program prepares them to work in a field or office environment by providing a strong foundation in basic surveying methods. They build on their broad knowledge with specific training in computer applications, data collectors and robotic total stations, AutoCAD drafting, specialized field and office skills, cadastral surveying skills, field astronomy, as well as Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and Global Positioning Systems (GPS).

“I was hired by Lloyd & Purcell Ltd. Ontario Land Surveyors three weeks after finishing the Survey Technician program,” said Scott Rowsell, a 2012 graduate of the program who now works as a survey field technician at

Lloyd and Purcell Land Surveyors in Newmarket. “Having access to the latest equipment allowed me to jump straight into the workforce and understand the equipment used by my employer. I knew what was expected of me and was able to apply what I learned in the program. Because the software that I used at Loyalist was modern, I had the skills necessary to work in the drafting area of surveying as well. Many of my classes were hands-on group projects in the field, so I graduated with experience as an instrument technician, as well as a note taker and party chief.”

For surveyors, having a college connection also creates access to invaluable resources ranging from expert faculty and industry research, to the most advanced equipment and software, on which students train.

“Loyalist’s Introduction to GIS/GPS course provides a practical introduction to the principles of GIS using projects and assignments produced in Esri ArcGIS,” said Loyalist Professor Bob Fencott. “The students learn the fundamentals of GPS data collection using a Sokkia GRX base station and rovers, and then use those skills for mapping and drawing projects.”

An ideal place to meet and recruit technicians is at college career fairs where surveyors can promote their business at a booth. More and more professionals from surveying, engineering, government, and transportation organizations are taking advantage of the opportunity to network with the next generation of workers. For employers interested in participating in Loyalist’s 16th Annual Career Fair on Thursday,



Loyalist College library.

February 7, 2013, the College accepts registrations until the end of January. Surveyors can also schedule College campus visits or classroom sessions to showcase opportunities with their organization.

“Companies often ask about our graduating students and we send them a list of individuals who have expressed interest,” said Bob. “All of our graduates are hired almost as soon as they graduate, because they have the skills needed in the industry. Employers can’t find enough Survey Technicians to fill the job demand.”

To attract the next generation of workers to the industry, Bob actively promotes the field and he encourages all surveyors to do the same. He believes it’s up to each member of the surveying community to build a positive awareness of the career opportunities available in the surveying field.

“Surveyors do a lot of research and investigation,” said Bob. “If a student likes to solve problems, they are likely going to do very well as a Survey Technician. They can choose to work in the field or the office. There is room for all of these people in the profession.”



For more information on the Loyalist Survey Technician program and partnership opportunities, please contact **Professor Bob Fencott** at (613) 969 – 1913 ext. 2419 or by email at bfencott@loyalistic.on.ca. You can also visit the Loyalist College website at www.loyalistcollege.com.