

Clark Diesel Partners with Portland Tractor

A new partnership roared to life this spring between Clark College's Diesel program and Portland Tractor, giving students hands-on access to modern heavy equipment and real-world training.



John Holbrook, Technical Services Manager at Portland Tractor, *far left*, with Diesel Technology students and Professor Jeff Rush, *third from left, back row*.

Through this collaboration, students learned how to assemble – and disassemble – complex heavy machinery, such as tractor gear boxes and transmissions. Portland Tractor graciously donated half of the equipment needed for this training and loaned the college the rest so that students could have full access to the tools that mirror what they'll encounter in the field.

Students learned how to operate heavy-duty transmissions; tear down, inspect, and reassemble drive chains; read Caterpillar

part lists and schematics; and master general mechanic skills and crane rigging and hoisting techniques. For many students, this was their first time handling large-scale equipment – an experience that sparked conversations about potential career paths available in the heavy equipment industry.

Taylor Cusack, operations analyst at Portland Tractor, was key in bringing the partnership to life, serving as the liaison between Clark and Portland Tractor. She created the banner that proudly hangs in the shop on campus and coordinated equipment deliveries.

But the most familiar name may have been John Holbrook, Technical Services Manager at Portland Tractor and a proud Clark alum from the class of 1984. John returned to campus for two weeks to support students and faculty as they worked on the new equipment. His connection to Clark runs deep, studying under Professor Bell as part of the student crew that helped build the campus sundial.

Many of the students who worked with John this term expressed interest in joining the Portland Tractor team, continuing the company's long history of hiring Clark graduates over the year.

While Portland Tractor has been the program's largest industry partner, it's not the only one. The Diesel program also collaborates with Noregon, a computer software company, and Tekton Hand Tools, providing students access to state-of-the-art tools and technology across disciplines.

Partnerships like this one provide students with things that go beyond tangible tools – students receive mentorship, exposure to industry expectations, and the confidence that comes from real-world practice. These collaborations deepen their learning experience and play a crucial role in helping students to graduate career-ready and equipped to thrive in today's evolving industry.



A new banner hangs in the Diesel Technology lab.

About Portland Tractor

Since 1976, Portland Tractor Inc. (PTI) has been a leading supplier of Caterpillar rebuilt and used/salvage heavy equipment parts, new OEM surplus parts, aftermarket parts, components, and attachments. Located in the heart of the Pacific Northwest, Portland Tractor's yard in Washougal is spread across 10 acres and includes over 60,000 square feet under the roof and holds not only the machines that they are currently dismantling, but also a wide selection of attachments, tires, wheels, and parts.



Learn More About Clark College's Diesel Technology Program

Clark's Diesel program prepares students for entry-level positions in the diesel technician trade, and it keeps up with industry changes through new and improved training in basic electronics and electrical systems. Students learn to work on brake systems, drive trains, electric and electronic circuits, hydraulic systems, and diesel engines, all of which are valuable skills for a successful career.

Learn more about the Diesel program at Clark.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley