

# POST-SECONDARY PROGRAMS BRINGING A NEW WAVE OF WATER AND WASTEWATER WORKERS

The water industry is facing a shift in its workforce: it's estimated that more than 35% of all water utility workers and 31% of wastewater utility workers in the United States will retire in the next decade, according to the Water Research Foundation.

Now, it's more important than ever to usher in a new wave of skilled and passionate workers.

In California, there are a number of post-secondary programs designed to do just that: provide the training and the skills necessary for this fresh crop of water and wastewater utility workers to carry on the critically important work of this industry.



**Santiago  
Canyon  
College**

Water utility science has an impact on everyday life – it is vital to human survival, and clean water ensures that people will not become sick.

Through the study of water utility science at **Santiago Canyon College**, students have the chance to contribute to a fundamental human need which not many professionals can say.

The SCC **Water Utility Science Program** has been offered for approximately 35 years and serves about 900 students annually. It is designed to serve those individuals employed or interested in employment in the water and/or wastewater fields and those who desire to upgrade their skills and/or receive certification from the State of California, the American Water Works Association, or the California Water Environment Association.

The Water Utility Science Program works closely with an industry advisory board, including water industry partners and its expert instructors to ensure the program is current to meet industry and student needs.

The program serves those in water and wastewater industries, along with those interested in getting into those careers, by providing professional/technical classes combined with hands-on experience. Coursework emphasizes fundamental aspects of drinking water distribution, drinking water treatment, wastewater collection, and wastewater treatments.

The certificate program is designed to prepare you for entry-level jobs in the water distribution, treatment and water reclamation industries. The associate of science degree provides coursework and internship experience designed to provide an overview of a wide range of environmental career opportunities.

Water Utility Science program graduates often pursue jobs with city, county, or state agencies in positions such as wastewater treatment plant operator, drinking water treatment plant operator, environmental laboratory technician, ultra-pure water technician, industrial pre-treatment coordinator, engineering consultants and technician, surface water management, or state and federal regulator.

"I knew that I was in the right place for my future career during my first class with Professor McLean. I was impressed with how he was able to break down concepts into pieces that were easy to follow," said 26-year-old Zachary Barker, a former Water Utility

Water utility science students have the opportunity to get hands-on experience and college credit through internships. Through these placements with local water utilities, students discover different career paths, establish a winning resume, gain networking opportunities, and the potential for career advancement.

Science student. "Even though I knew nothing about water utility science at that point in time, I knew that he was going to provide me with a thorough and comprehensive education for my future."

Classes provide students technical and professional lessons combined with hands-on experience taught by instructors who are water utility science professionals. Coursework emphasizes the fundamental aspects of drinking water treatment, distribution, wastewater collection, and wastewater treatments. Certificate programs are designed to prepare students for entry level jobs like water distribution operator, water quality technician, and maintenance technician. The three degrees/certificates options are:

- Water Treatment
- Water Distribution
- Wastewater/Environmental Sanitation

Every semester, approximately 20 students are in the water utility science internship program with about 10 placed with the Orange County Sanitation District. Interns work half-time and go to class the remainder of the time. Some internships are paid while others are non-paid.

Current water utility science student, 27-year-old Artun Eren has earned both the water treatment and water distribution certificates. Eren is now working on the wastewater/environment sanitation certificate. He has participated in two part-time internships at the Yorba Linda Water District and Long Beach Water Department.

Eren said, "I've been told my whole life that water was important, but it didn't really hit me until I got older. I have always been fascinated by the natural and political history of water. I decided to take the water utility science classes because I wanted to learn the practical components and applications of water."

For more information, visit [www.sccollege.edu/watersci](http://www.sccollege.edu/watersci), email [careereducation@sccollege.edu](mailto:careereducation@sccollege.edu), or call the Business Career Technical Education (BCTE) division at 714-628-4883.