



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
ENERGY

OFFICE OF
**ENVIRONMENTAL
MANAGEMENT**

Hanford Collaborations: Creating Connections With the Next Generation

May 16, 2023



From left, John Navarro, Washington State University (WSU) Tri-Cities Career Center, Sandra Haynes, WSU Tri-Cities chancellor, WSU Career Center staff, John Eschenberg, Central Plateau Cleanup Company president and CEO, and Wes Bryan, Washington River Protection Solutions president and project manager, cut a ribbon at the new WSU Tri-Cities Career Center.

RICHLAND, Wash. — Highlighting pathways to careers on the Hanford Site, DOE Office of Environmental Management (**EM**) **Office of River Protection** (ORP) contractor Washington River Protection Solutions (WRPS) established creative collaborations with local colleges and universities that allow interns the opportunity to advance into careers at Hanford.

In 2022, WRPS donated \$250,000 to Washington State University (WSU) Tri-Cities to begin a co-op internship program. Through the program, students can participate in paid internships that could lead to full-time employment after graduation. “Students today are looking for work that makes an impact, and the complex mission at the **Hanford Site** certainly meets that criterion,” said Ricky Bang, ORP **Tank Farms**

Program Division director. “With so many options for the next generation of workers, it’s great to see contractors finding creative ways to engage with them.”



A Washington State University Tri-Cities student, left, chats with Haydee Ramirez and Timmary Staigle with Washington River Protection Solutions Workforce Resources about internship and career opportunities during a student-and-recruiter event at the campus student union building earlier this month.

Along with establishing the co-op program, WSU Tri-Cities used the donation to establish a new career center to provide a space for students and local employers to connect. The center includes office space for recruiters to conduct internship and job interviews, and gives students access to help with resume and cover letter development, interview coaching, and information about internships and employment opportunities.

“The WRPS donation to building a career center and establishing unique experiential learning for students is very meaningful and reflective of the support we receive from the Tri-Cities community,” said Sandra Haynes, WSU Tri-Cities chancellor, during a recent career center ribbon cutting. “These pathways to careers, especially careers at the Hanford Site, help our community prosper and contribute to the Tri-Cities being a great place to live and work.”

There are currently nine WSU co-op students involved in internships at WRPS, with several interns already transitioning into full-time employment.

“Getting into the industry was hard during COVID-19,” said Yareli Curiel, a former WSU Tri-Cities co-op intern who is now an engineer for WRPS. “Being able to go onsite, have things explained to us and see things was really beneficial.”



Washington River Protection Solutions President and Project Manager Wes Bryan works at the coffee shop on the Washington State University Tri-Cities campus as part of a student-and-recruiter engagement event earlier this month.

WRPS recruiters recently shared information on campus about their co-op and internship opportunities. Last year WRPS hired 54 interns through co-ops at WSU Tri-Cities and a similar program at Columbia Basin College in Pasco, Washington, and from internships.

“This partnership is already paying dividends for us, with a wide range of engineers and business systems and IT students that we just hired from the first co-op group,” said WRPS President and Project Manager Wes Bryan. “This program is really an in-depth interview process. It’s a chance for us to learn about students and for students to learn about the company. Students get the opportunity to experience their fields of study and see firsthand all the aspects of a potential career.”