

For Immediate Release

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Media contact: Ron Cole, manager of news and information services, 330-941-3285

Spring commencement

YSU, FirstEnergy program graduates first class

The first 11 students in Youngstown State University's power plant technology program will graduate May 21 at YSU's spring commencement.

Due to the growing number of graduates, commencement will be split into two ceremonies on May 21: 9:30 a.m. in Beeghly Center for undergraduate students, and 2 p.m. in Stambaugh Auditorium for graduate students. In all, nearly 1,200 students will receive diplomas.

Among them is Nathan Miller of Austintown.

Miller is in the first graduating class of the associate's degree program in power plant technology, launched in 2003 through a partnership between the YSU Rayen College of Engineering and Technology and FirstEnergy Corp.

"I have always been into rebuilding motors," said Miller, 28, who already has a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from YSU. "After I went through a tour at the power plant, I knew it was the right field for me."

Miller, who currently works in construction, said he anticipates earning at least \$20 an hour his first year on the job.

"I expect 100 percent job placement," said Ted Bosela, associate dean of the engineering college, who helped design the program. "And I expect this trend to continue for at least a decade."

The two-year, 66-hour associate of technical study degree was developed in anticipation of the retirements of a large number of power plant operators at FirstEnergy.

(more)

Power plant graduates/Add 1

Students get hands-on experience working at YSU's central utility plant and the college's steam turbine and internal combustion engine labs, as well as at a FirstEnergy power plant for a 15-week internship. Students also work at a plant one day every other week each semester.

In addition, graduates will have 800 out of the 900 hours needed to take the third-class stationary engineer's license exam, which is needed to operate a boiler in Ohio. After about a month on the job, the equivalent to 100 hours, the test is administered.

Those who don't go through the associate degree program need 1,800 hours before they can take the licensure exam.

"Going through this program was a great learning experience," said Roger Humberson, 28, of Austintown. Humberson, who has also gone through the interview process with FirstEnergy, recently gave up his job of seven years at Victory White Waterworks in anticipation of a new job with the utility company. "All the teachers know what they are talking about," he said.

"I am trying to teach them what I did for 20 years," said Rick Testa, who worked on power plant systems in boats as a merchant marine before coming to YSU. Testa, who teaches in the power plant technology program full time, was an engineer in YSU's facilities department for four and a half years.

"Power plant technology is going to be a great field to get into for at least the next 10 years," he said. "Everyone needs electricity."

