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REPORTING

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Career seekers find the future of facility management in California is bright



(Photo: USAF/Sue Sapp)

Elizabeth Zamora was nearing completion of her business degree from Chaffey College when she learned about the new Facilities Management Program. She wanted to join, but that meant extending her time until graduation and entering the workforce, which was a difficult decision for the mother of three children and her husband, who took on a second job to support the family.

But she did it. "It was the best choice I ever made," said Zamora. "I think back and everything I went through to get to this point and taking that jump just changed my life completely."

While a student, she obtained an internship at ABM Industries, a facility management company, and participated in the campus chapter of the International Facilities Management Association (IFMA). Zamora graduated and is now



College of San Mateo has since joined Chaffey College in offering this pathway and two more colleges are scheduled to join next year.

The need for a facility management workforce is going to increase in the coming years, which makes the California Community Colleges and the IFMA Foundation collaboration critical in training the next generation.

This sector is facing what Chaffey College's Associate Dean of Strong Workforce Vanessa Thomas calls a "gray tsunami" as the current workforce ages. "Many individuals in the industry began their careers in entry-level positions and worked their way up to management. These individuals are beginning to retire. There is no education-to-employment pipeline to fill the currently vacant and soon-to-be vacant positions. The Facilities Management program will help train skilled workers to bridge the employment gap between labor and industry."

IFMA Foundation Executive Director Diane Levine said that is good news for students. Not only will there be jobs available, the median wage for a facility manager in California is \$91,000. "We've got an aging workforce and the job is really well-paid and it can't be off-shored or taken over by a robot," said Levine. "These students who are graduating from the program have a nearly 100 percent job placement."

Each year the Chaffey College's program has grown, and Thomas attributes it to student word-of-mouth. "They talk about the various aspects of the Facilities Management program because it's so diversified," said Thomas. "Students become aware of the multiple pathways within the industry. They get excited about the opportunities and encourage each other to pursue this career field. The peer-to-peer promotions generate excitement, which is really awesome."

"The pilot started at Chaffey College and we're introducing a certificate in Essentials of Facilities Management," said Levine. "It's a globally recognized industry certificate along with the Associates and Business degree. As part of that, it requires internships. So we partner with business and we have Global Workforce Initiative advisors who provide the internship programs to students. Our two major advisors are Sodexo and ABM."

IFMA describes Facility Management as "a profession that encompasses multiple disciplines to ensure functionality, comfort, safety and efficiency of the built environment by integrating people, place, process and technology."

The variety of skills required is what interested Zamora. "It was a little scary because it was a little bit of everything, but that was the most interesting part of it because facilities management covers such a wide range of areas."

Chaffey College's facilities management program extends beyond the business management major to students learning technical skills.

"We also have our [Industrial Technology \(INTECH\) Center](#) in Fontana which offers noncredit HVAC courses that directly align with the Facilities Management certificate and degree programs," added Thomas. "As a result, we are promoting the Facilities Management degree program to HVAC students to expand their perspective and make them aware of the management opportunities that exist in a global industry."

The college may add training for the current workforce to teach them how to comply with California's new [Building Energy Efficiency Program](#) standards going into effect in 2020.



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