

The Daily Courier

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Yavapai College has been teaching how to build 'green' for decades

By Paula Rhoden
The Daily Courier

Tuesday, August 19, 2008



Courtesy

A student works on the frame of a structure designed with environmental considerations in mind.

PRESCOTT - The Residential Building Technology program at [Yavapai College](#) has received widespread recognition during its 30-year history.

Despite numerous national awards, the RBT program seems to be a well-kept secret locally.

RBT Director Tony Grahame said Yavapai College's program is one of only two in the nation recognized for excellence in its green building curriculum.

Grahame has directed the program for 12 years. He said that 30 years ago, the program's focus was solar technology.

"When the grants dried up, we shifted to building trades. Our current aim is residential technology. Our objective is to teach students to develop, manage and build crafted, healthy, safe, durable, comfortable, affordable, energy- and resource-efficient, environmentally responsive houses," Grahame said.

The director said that today's residential construction market has reduced the number of students enrolling in the RBT courses. He said people are reluctant to pursue residential construction, "but we know it will come back."

The RBT program offers a two-year degree and three one-year certification programs.

Students earning a RBT degree can choose from a variety of job opportunities within the building and construction industry.

"We can teach people what they need to know to build houses for the 21st century," Grahame said.

The RBT program is not limited to people seeking full-time employment in the building trades.

RBT program development consultant Richard Peterson said the people who want to build their own green home or re-model using green principles could also benefit from the program.

Grahame said green construction is a conscientious decision to make good choices. He said the five cornerstones of green building are design, resource, energy use, water use and indoor air quality.

Green remodeling could be as simple as sealing ductwork and adding insulation.

The director said following the 2006 Energy Code is not more expensive than following a standard building code.

"New construction is about trade-offs. You may spend more in one area to spend less in another. Energy efficiency is a major component of green buildings," Grahame said.

Fifteen years ago, green products were hard to find and expensive. Today, Grahame said, they are on shelves and affordable.

Builders construct homes to a variety of levels of green. Grahame said the ideal goal is "net-zero energy. For new construction, people should always put in what can't be put in later. For remodeling, it is best to have a plan. The best way to re-green is to improve the performance of an existing house."

The director said the college would offer a course on re-greening during the 2009 spring semester, adding that if anyone wants to learn how to build energy efficient houses, "this is one of the few places in the country they can do that."

Anyone interested in more information about Yavapai College's Residential Building Technology program should contact Grahame at tgrahame@yc.edu or 717-7726.

Additional information is also available at www.yc.edu/RBT.

Contact the reporter at prhoden@prescottaz.com

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