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Getting a head start



SUNY Cobleskill becomes the first college in North America to offer ASM modules and credentials as part of its degree process **BY TIMOTHY MARTEN**

This spring, SUNY Cobleskill became the first college in North America to offer a structured course that incorporates Advanced Snow Manager credentials as part of the degree completion process.

In collaboration with SIMA, SUNY Cobleskill has developed the “Advanced Snow Management” course that couples SIMA’s Advanced Snow Management online modules and credentialing with hands-on lab experiences, site visits and coaching from Advanced Snow Managers and Certified Snow Professionals.

Snow and ice services are becoming an increasingly complex and critical part of many landscape companies’ offerings. By undervaluing snow and ice management, the typical college or university landscape-oriented degree program prepares students for only half, or — at best — three-quarters of the work and potential revenue of a year-round landscape firm. This degree model leaves graduates with a vast gulf in career-readiness in snow and ice management.

Comprehensive preparation

Snow and ice management is an unforgiving industry, rife with opportunities for a crew leader, manager or owner to end up at the center of a lawsuit. As such, merely incorporating snow and ice management into a series of lessons or a handful of lectures across various courses is no longer sufficient preparation. It requires a comprehensive approach as a standalone component of a landscape-oriented degree track. SUNY Cobleskill has begun to use ASM as an



ProScapes owner Rick Kier, CSP, welcomed SUNY Cobleskill students for a behind-the-scenes look at snow and ice management operations as part of the college’s new Advanced Snow Management curriculum.

essential factor in educating the next generation of industry professionals.

This Advanced Snow Management course brings students together from across curriculum areas, including landscape, plant science, turf management and agricultural engineering. Online ASM modules are supported with forum discussions and assignments highlighting learning outcomes. I manage the course day to day, and SIMA Director of Education & Outreach (and adjunct faculty) Phill Sexton coordinates and plans full-day lab experiences, including firm visits, mentoring and equipment rodeos.

Real world exposure

Placing students into the professional environment is an essential part of applying classroom knowledge in the real world. In one of the full-day labs, students visited Rick Kier, CSP, of ProScapes in Jamesville, NY. The students received a behind-the-scenes

look at snow planning, operations and equipment management, and learned from Kier’s 30-plus years of experience. His professionalism and business location make ProScapes an excellent partner for incorporating mentorship into our ASM education at SUNY Cobleskill.

This May, eight students from the SUNY Cobleskill Advanced Snow Management course will have completed ASM credentials as part of their degree completion. As SUNY Cobleskill celebrates its centennial, the landscape program is looking ahead as it strives to more effectively prepare students for the complexities of snow and ice and green industries. ❄️

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