

USU Eastern Welding Program Welcomes Two New Instructors

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By Ysabel Nehring | November 30, 2021



New instructors Jeremiah Garcia and Jake Clement bring unique skills and expertise to the welding program at Utah State University Eastern.

Both former students of the USU Eastern welding program (formerly the College of Eastern Utah), Garcia and Clement joined the USUE welding program as professional practice instructors of welding with a mission to share their experience with the next generation of welders.

"I wanted to teach at USU because this program helped establish my welding skills," said Clement. "I graduated with a ton of valuable work experience and virtually no debt. This program made a huge difference in my life, and I want to give back to it."

Garcia expressed a similar desire to give back to the program and help students.

"This is where my welding career began," said Garcia. "I want to see this place continue to produce highly skilled welders."

The new instructors began teaching in August and bring with them experience in a number of different areas. Garcia brings over 18 years of welding experience, 13 of those specializing in cross-country gas and oil pipelines. Clement has 10 years of experience covering many sectors of the industry from mining, transportation, and structural steel to aerospace, medical, and nuclear technologies. Clement also has experience as a small business owner.

Austin Welch, assistant professor of welding, emphasized that expert instructors like Garcia and Clement are what sets the USUE welding program apart.

"Students in our program can expect small class sizes, a lot of face-to-face interaction, and a lot of camaraderie with fellow students and instructors," Welch said. "We are very well-rounded in that we seek excellence not only in hands-on welding skills for our students, but also in theoretical knowledge of the applications that they're performing while they're here."

According to Welch, skilled instructors are the biggest resource offered at USUE, in addition to state-of-the-art equipment and a workshop that mirrors a real-life workplace setting.

Between the three instructors, students in the program gain skills and experience in arc welding and cutting processes, submerged arc welding, resistance spot welding, and other industry practices. Garcia currently spearheads the creation of a new course specifically focused on pipe welding.

While in the program, students develop critical thinking skills, learn how to interface with different brands of machinery, and gain familiarity with different aspects of business and the welding industry.

Clement points out that welding is a much broader field than many people assume.

"We can fly on airplanes thousands of miles in the air and travel around the globe because of welding," said Clement. "It's really hard to find something that we have available to us today that doesn't have welding involved in it in some way, and I want my students to consider all of the options and make an informed decision about what sector of the welding industry they want to enter."

Another point of pride for the USUE welding program are the SkillsUSA welding competitions held yearly on the local, state, and national levels. Winners from each level are eligible to participate in the next competition. This year, a team of three welding students from USUE won the national title in welding fabrication, the seventh gold medal won by a USU team in the past 13 years. This winning record helps to attract talented students from across the country.

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Welch shared that the welding program at USUE is expanding to keep up with industry changes and student needs.

"The future of this program is expanding access and equity in our courses, all while maintaining a high level of quality in the education students can get," said Welch.

These expansions include offering evening and summer courses that allow students to complete their education faster while enabling them to remain employed. There are also plans to offer a certificate in welding at other USU campus locations, including Blanding and Moab.

"Our program has a good mix of traditional and nontraditional students," said Welch. "We also have what I like to call explorers, students who are enrolled in another program who take welding courses as an elective, and we are happy to help all of these students learn about welding and see where these skills can take them."

The welding program boasts a 100% placement rate for students who want to actively pursue welding employment. Students can also take their welding certificate or associates degree from USUE and apply it toward a degree in manufacturing engineering technology from Weber State University.

"This program is an excellent start to the career path of a welding engineer," said Clement. "In my experience, you will end up being one of the few welding engineers who actually has a good grasp of how to weld."

The USUE welding program offers rolling admission, meaning students can register for any semester, fall, spring, or summer. To learn more about admissions and the program, contact Kim Mortensen, academic advisor, at kim.mortensen@usu.edu or (435) 630-0794, or visit usu.edu.

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