



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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INDUSTRY CELEBRATES LATINO STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS

The wine grape industry gathered Friday, March 24 at the Walter Clore Center in Prosser to celebrate the 2016/2017 class of the Latino Ag Education Program (LAEP). Nearly 50 students, half of them women, graduated from Level Two Viticulture Production Systems and Management and a higher level Vineyard Management and Integrated Pest Management course.

LAEP is offered by Wenatchee Valley College and sponsored by the Washington Winegrowers and Yakima Valley College. The program is designed to equip Latino employees in viticulture the technical expertise that will allow them to flourish and grow in their job. The first LAEP class began in 2007 and since the program has graduated nearly 350 employees.

Leo Garcia and Francisco Sarmiento, faculty at Wenatchee Valley College, teach the courses. Sarmiento and Garcia's cultural and employment background as well as Spanish fluency allow them to uniquely relate to, serve, and instruct the Latino students.

Since its inception, female employees were not taking full advantage of LAEP so in 2015 Wenatchee Valley College and the Winegrowers built and offered LAEP's first women-only "Level One" viticulture course, offering a higher degree of comfort for Latinas to attend and actively participate. Due to the course's sell-out success for 2016/2017 a follow up "Level Two" viticulture course for women was offered.

Level Two covers site selection and vineyard establishment, soils, pests and irrigation management, human resources, vineyard business plans, marketing, and whole farm ecosystems.

Vineyard Management and Integrated Pest Management provides intensive technical instruction to prepare employees as pest management scouts and to introduce them to basic vineyard economics and management. This course prepares students for mid-management and management positions.

"Thanks to the LAEP classes, I have been able to better understand grape production and solve some difficult situations from what I learned in the human resources section of the class," said Agapita Salazar, Sagemoor Vineyards.

For 2017-2018, LAEP tentatively plans to offer a Level One Viticulture Production Systems and Management class, open to men and women, and the upper level Vineyard Management and Integrated Pest Management for the 2017 graduates of the Level Two class. Registration will open later this summer and courses begin in early November.

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Photos available upon request.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Latino Ag Education Program](#)

[Washington Winegrowers](#)

[Wenatchee Valley College](#)

[Yakima Valley College](#)