

GETTING WIND OF AN OPPORTUNITY

The students recently visited Massachusetts Maritime Academy's MCRE where they saw first-hand how individuals are being trained to work in the offshore wind industry. (Courtesy: Massachusetts Maritime Academy)

Massachusetts Maritime Academy partners with Building Pathways South to introduce offshore wind to pre-apprentice participants.

By MASSACHUSETTS MARITIME ACADEMY

With the passing of the historic infrastructure bill in August 2021, the backbone of the United States will undergo a transformation over the next several years. Workers will be needed in all facets of the construction industry, and Building Pathways South (BPS), a pre-apprenticeship program in Southeastern Massachusetts, is preparing young men and women for opportunities available today as well as down the road.

Yvonne Tobey, program manager, BPS, has been opening doors for many people interested in joining the building trades over the last five years. Through the organization's "Introduction to Construction" program, young adults are provided with an overview of the various trades that make up the construction industry, such as the iron workers, plumbers, bricklayers, and pipefitters just to name a few. Participants also receive job skills training as well as coaching and counseling to be successful. "My goal is that every individual who participates in our program lands a union apprenticeship in the trade they want," Tobey said. "The opportunities are available, and our role is to help deserving men and women get started on a path to success."

WIND OPPORTUNITY

With the wind farms under construction off the coasts of Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard and understanding that \$100 billion for electric power generation and transmission, including clean energy, is earmarked in the infrastructure bill, Tobey knew she needed to introduce her students to this opportunity. Following the recent Project Labor Agreement between the Union Building Trades and Vineyard Wind, Tobey, with the help of Massachusetts Clean Energy Center, was able to include the growing industry of offshore wind in the BPS curriculum. "My first call was to the Massachusetts Maritime Academy," Tobey said. "I knew they were a leader in OSW training, and I was hopeful we could partner with the school on the curriculum." She had the right idea. Tobey connected with Capt. Michael R. Burns Jr., executive director of the Academy's Center for Responsible Energy (MCRE), who confirmed that a new course titled "Introduction to Offshore Wind" might be the perfect addition to the BPS program.

The 40-hour course developed by Megan Amsler, executive director, Self-Reliance Corporation, was shortened and adapted to fit into the seven-week BPS "Introduction to Construction" course. Amsler began teaching a 27-hour version of the curriculum on Feb. 21 at the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, (IBEW) Trades Center in Taunton, Massachusetts, where the program is being held.

CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

The current course includes six students coming from the

South Coast, Cape Cod, and the Islands. High school graduates or students with state-issued high school equivalency credentials are eligible to participate. In addition to classroom instruction on the construction trades, participants receive workplace safety training, including OSHA 10, First Aid, and CPR certification. Once they understand the basics, the students move on to experiential learning through field trips to construction sites and training facilities.

The group visited Massachusetts Maritime Academy's MCRE on March 15 where they saw first-hand how individuals are being trained to work in the offshore wind industry. At the MCRE, participants witnessed a Working at Heights class and saw where OSW workers are trained to transfer safely from a vessel to a wind turbine, launch and board a life raft, perform first aid, and extinguish fires.

"This class provides a great overview of wind-energy technology and explores the many facets of building a successful offshore wind project; hopefully, this course will pique some students' interest in exploring the many opportunities for a career in offshore wind," Amsler said. "My expectations are that the students will not only become more familiar with offshore wind but understand the hows and whys of renewable energy's role in decarbonization."

A Massachusetts Clean Energy study estimates that offshore wind farms will create 2,000-3,000 jobs and generate economic impacts between \$1 billion and \$2 billion in the region. "We've wanted to offer an intro course for a while, and we're pleased that BPS is the first organization to take advantage of this curriculum," Burns said. "The OSW industry is a rising tide, and it's nice to be a part of helping everyone take advantage of the opportunities this growing industry offers." "These jobs are going to need to be filled," Tobey said. "I want to make sure they're filled by Americans, and if they can be filled by young people who are introduced to the offshore wind industry through our program, then that would be fantastic." ↴

ABOUT MASSACHUSETTS MARITIME ACADEMY (MMA)

MMA is a fully accredited, four-year, co-educational state university offering Bachelor and Master of Science degrees that are highly regarded in the worldwide maritime industry and beyond. For more than 100 years, MMA has prepared women and men for careers on land and sea. MMA challenges students to succeed by balancing a unique regimented lifestyle with a typical four-year college environment. Located on Cape Cod at the mouth of the scenic Cape Cod Canal, Massachusetts Maritime Academy is the ideal college to pursue the love for the ocean, concern for the environment, interest in math and science, and a thirst for adventure. For more information, go to www.maritime.edu.