

KIRKLAND REPORTER

Lake Washington Tech to offer degree in Harley motorcycle maintenance

By **KENDALL WATSON**
 Kirkland Reporter Staff Writer
 Jun 05 2008 · **UPDATED**

Sean Kebely didn't know what he wanted to do for a career after graduating from Inglemoor High School. But he knew he loved his custom-built Harley-Davidson motorcycle.

"I grew up around bikes," said Kebely, who built his own Harley-Davidson. "It's built from spare parts and stuff I made from scratch."

For four years after graduation Kebely, 23, looked for a career and toiled around with motorcycles. Then a recommendation directed him to check out the motorcycle, marine and power equipment program at Lake Washington Technical College. Now he is one of 20 students who will specialize in Harley motorcycles starting this fall.

Embracing the era of technical specialization, the college will soon offer an applied science degree in Harley-Davidson motorcycle maintenance.

The program is under the guidance of instructor Bob Monroig.

"We're the best kept secret on the Eastside," said Monroig last Thursday as he surveyed his classroom and the dozens of Harley motorcycles lined up inside.

Monroig says he hopes to quickly fill a total of 20 spots in the class -- developed in partnership with Harley-Davidson -- then possibly open a second class based on demand. The college has been an authorized Harley-Davidson training center for 10 years, but the new degree will allow Monroig to give students specialized training usually conducted only by the motorcycle maker. The program is only one of two in the country.

Administrators hope the program will give LWTC graduates a competitive edge after graduation. According to Monroig, the demand for Harley-specific mechanics currently exceed supply.

"The dealers know about us," he said. "They're always looking for local talent ... They give me a call to see if I have anyone ready to go to work."

Students in the program go through a six-quarter, two-year program to learn the basics of ignition systems and power transmissions, eventually working their way into specialized classes on the motorcycle's air-cooled engine (co-developed by Porsche) and hi-tech electronic systems.

The benefits of such a partnership are also evident in Monroig's classroom, which has the feel of an aircraft hangar thanks to a high roof and ample floor space. The room is partly filled with the latest Harley-Davidson roadster and sport motorcycle models on raised platforms. The 2008 models are due to be shipped back to Milwaukee in a few weeks, only to be replaced with the latest 2009 models. The "surplus" motorcycles are given to the program free of charge.

"The average Harley costs \$15, \$20 thousand," he said. "We've got access to over 20 late model (motorcycles)."

A number of courses in the program are focused on the latest electronic innovations as much as mechanical systems. The motorcycle is integrated with a number of "fly-by-wire" wireless systems, such as anti-lock brakes, GPS, electronic throttle control and driving instruments. Students use Bluetooth wireless connections to check the bike's computers for performance issues.

"This isn't your dad's Harley," Monroig said.

The partnership is just one of many at the school that supply it with products and help it specialize its programs. Some of the college's more unique degree programs include animated game design, wine education and funeral services (expected to begin this time next year).



Bob Monroig, seen here in the motorcycle garage at Lake Washington Technical College, will direct the new Harley-Davidson service technician program at the school.

Katherine Ganter/Reporter Newspapers

"We've just got an amazing mix of programs here at LWTC," said David Haworth, a spokesman for the college.

Haworth estimated the cost of the program at about \$5,800 a year.

The college currently has an enrollment of over 4,000 students, and Haworth said the low cost of attending LWTC, high graduation rates and partnerships with potential employers made the school an excellent choice for area high school students seeking a career.

"A lot of our students already have jobs line up," he said.

Kirkland Reporter Staff Writer Kendall Watson can be reached at kwatson@reporternewspapers.com or 425.822.9166 ext 5052.