

For Immediate Release

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SRR top executive offers invaluable advice to area college students

AIKEN, S.C. (December 15, 2010) – Amid a successful 30-year career focused largely on positive contributions to the nuclear industry, Dave Olson knows when it's time to return a favor.

As Operations and Deputy Project Manager with Savannah River Remediation LLC (SRR) at the U.S. Department of Energy's Savannah River Site (SRS), Olson is personally determined to "give back" by helping today's college students become tomorrow's competent leaders in his industry and others.

Building upon the extensive corporate leadership training and personal experiences he has been given by URS, his corporate employer, Olson uses what he describes as a two-pronged process to reach the students by visiting colleges in South Carolina and Georgia within proximity to SRS on his personal time.

Initially, he gives a presentation to students and reveals how his rural Midwestern, farm-belt origins have positively spurred his career success. His presentation includes a poignant message called "Been There – Done That, but Not Done Yet."

Olson's message enlightens students on his early career, supported with a shiny new Chemical Engineering degree from the University of Minnesota.

He also chronicles various scenarios surrounding his post-collegiate career, moves that were both advantageous and detrimental in his ultimate quest to become a successful executive, all of them teaching him life lessons that would serve him well in the future.

A day later, he welcomes one-on-one visits with students to personally discuss their career choices and other relevant factors in their readiness to enter the workforce and be significant life contributors.

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As a father of three college-aged sons, one a recent graduate, Olson says his reasons for wanting to “give back” stem from his recent observations of the current crop of college students.

“My sons have a lot to do with this. I’ve noticed that many from their generation are lacking in certain areas. Too many of today’s young graduates are gifted academically, but have short-comings in other important arenas of life,” he said.

Olson, who also has a Master’s of Business Administration degree from Augusta State University, suggests that students take courses such as basic economics, speech communications and technical writing to help develop so-called “soft skills.”

Sports also play a role, according to the SRR Executive.

Olson's time as a player-coach of intramural teams in college led to 17 years of youth basketball coaching, a foundation that causes him to strongly urge students to participate in team sports to learn the importance and value of teamwork.

Olson has visited South Carolina institutions, such as South Carolina State University, Claflin University, Allen University, Benedict College, Voorhees College, Clemson University and the University of South Carolina.

In Georgia, he has visited Augusta State University and Augusta’s Paine College.

He is even extending his career advice to high school students with a recent visit to the South Carolina Governor's School of Science and Math in Hartsville.

SRR Human Resources Director Machell Mims says the collegiate response has been expectedly impressive from students and career personnel alike.

“We figured, going forward, that once implemented, the colleges would immediately recognize that Mr. Olson’s self-initiative is not only special but timely in this economic climate,” she said.

“For a manager of his caliber to make himself accessible to college students is, frankly, unheard of,” said Mims. “Especially on a one-on-one basis.”

Mims added that Olson’s talks are targeting students with diverse majors, although in past years SRS recruiters have commonly sought out engineering students due to the Site's high-tech environment.

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Robert Walker, a freshman marketing major at Paine College, said Olson's talk was personally relevant. "I'd like to become a CEO someday, but he gave good advice to become fully prepared first." Walker is from the Atlanta suburb of Lithonia, Ga.

Deloris Croom, Paine College's Career Services Director, said Olson's character and leadership reflects SRR's commitment to its community. "And obviously, he's a man of principle," she said.

Gerald DeVaughn, Director of Career Planning at Voorhees College, described Olson's recent talk as informative and passionate.

"It was obvious the students felt his sincerity," said DeVaughn.

Olson's primary goal is to help students become better prepared in today's competitive job market. He provides first-hand, one-on-one feedback on interviewing techniques, resumes, career-planning and other topics pertinent for young graduates prior to their entry into the corporate landscape.

Said Olson: "This is my way of helping to prepare the next generation of leaders and in many ways it's an expanded mentoring opportunity for me. It is rewarding when one of the students sends an e-mail or calls me letting me know they got a job as an intern, co-op or full-time employee aided by our preparation time together. That is what makes it all worthwhile."

Savannah River Remediation (SRR) is the Liquid Waste Contractor at SRS. SRS is owned by the U.S. Department of Energy. SRR is a team of companies led by URS Corp. with partners Bechtel National, CH2M Hill and Babcock & Wilcox. Critical subcontractors for the contract are AREVA, Energy Solutions and URS Safety Management Solutions.

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