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**Water Programs: A worldwide training giant, resource**

The Office of Water Programs at Sacramento State – a nonprofit within the College of Engineering and Computer Science – is the world’s largest producer of home-study training materials for operators and managers of water- and wastewater-treatment and collection facilities.

OWP has more than 20 titles in its catalog, such as the 673-page *Water Distribution System Operation and Maintenance*, and has sold in excess of 1.2 million manuals, course enrollments, instructional videos and online courses to help operators throughout North America pass their certification exams and learn how to protect public health and the environment.

“They are written by operators, for operators, in the language of operators,” says Ken Kerri, OWP’s first director and now a consultant to the program. “There are more than 100,000 operators, and a significant percentage of them have taken our courses.”

OWP had its unofficial beginnings in 1968, when the operators of Sacramento County’s 20 wastewater treatment plants asked Kerri, then a professor of civil engineering, to help them develop a professional training manual. No such instruction books existed at the time, and plant operators from throughout Northern California drove to Sacramento weekly to attend the region’s only training classes.

At Kerri’s behest, the Sacramento County operators wrote down everything they knew about performing their jobs, and Kerri fashioned their notes into the first how-to guide produced by what soon would become the Office of Water Programs.

Ramzi Mahmood, a professor of civil engineering and interim dean of the College of Engineering and Computer Science, took over as OWP’s director in 1997 when Kerri retired. In 1999, Mahmood added an engineering research group focused on stormwater and environmental water quality.

OWP’s full-time research staff today includes six environmental engineers, a geologist, an engineering hydrologist and a chemist. They, with engineering faculty and graduate students, have performed more than $20 million worth of contract and grant work for a variety of government agencies and private/nonprofit organizations. The work is mostly in the areas of stormwater monitoring, treatment device performance tests and erosion control.
“We see ourselves as a technical resource, doing applied research to help state and local agencies find solutions to problems,” says Mahmood.

For example, a new state-funded research project, led by OWP research engineer Dipen Patel, is under way at Sacramento State’s Sustainable Technology Outdoor Research Center (STORC). A team of graduate students is experimenting with different mixes of engineered soil and pea gravel to filter out pollutants in stormwater before it flows into rivers and streams. The results will be useful to every community that must treat its stormwater.

OWP built STORC in 2003, with funding from the California Integrated Waste Management Board, under the Used Oil Research, Testing and Demonstration Grant Programs. Today, the center is a resource for several campus researchers conducting experiments.

OWP’s clients and projects include:

- California Department of Transportation: OWP provides technical assistance for the Caltrans Stormwater Management Program.
- California Department of Water Resources’ Division of Safety of Dams: OWP assists with the development of emergency action plans and dam-break inundation maps.
- Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District: OWP assists with the planning and evaluation of an ongoing wastewater sampling program.
- California Water Resources Control Board: OWP develops and delivers training for the staff.
- California State Parks: OWP assists with the implementation of the park service’s stormwater program.

Sacramento State’s Office of Water Programs is the largest self-supported academic research and outreach center in the College of Engineering and Computer Science.

For more information on OWP and its course offerings, go to www.owp.csus.edu/. For media assistance, contact Sacramento State’s Office of Public Affairs at (916) 278-6156. – Dixie Reid

Sacramento State is making a difference in California’s Capital Region and beyond. We offer a life-changing opportunity for our 28,000 students, preparing them to be leaders in their professions and communities. Our professors are known for their dedication to great teaching. And our location in the capital of the nation’s most populous state allows students to pursue unique internships and research.

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