

Calif. company brings wine testing to UCC

[DD Bixby](#)

The News-Review

Friday, March 26, 2010



UCC's Southern Oregon Wine Institute Director Chris Lake balances on an auger to push the drill into the earth as he and several others plant the college's first grape vines last spring. UCC recently received word that a wine testing lab will open shop on its campus soon.

ROBIN LOZNAK/ News-Review File Photo

Umpqua Community College intends to add a few more letters and a lot of prominence to its wine program with a renowned laboratory promising to open shop on campus.

On March 17, ETS Laboratories founder and President Gordon Burns sent a letter to the local college committing to open a wine-testing satellite lab, which would provide testing services and support the Southern Oregon Wine Institute academic program.

ETS offers a wide range of routine testing for wineries and accredited analysis.

Eventually, the lab will be located in the planned SOWI building, for which the UCC Foundation is currently raising funds.

An interim facility will house the new lab until the permanent building is constructed, but no date has been set.

“We're committed to do it and ideally it will happen before the next harvest,” Burns said this morning, but he was hesitant to confirm a specific date in case it takes longer to open.

UCC officials say they anticipate the lab to be in place in time for the fall crush, an important time for vintners to have lab tests readily available.

“(ETS) helps winemakers protect their wines from being flawed,” Chris Lake, SOWI director,

said. “At harvest time particularly, they want testing right next door.”

The new lab would employ two to three people. Burns said the company's preference is to hire people from the local community.

Burns and his wife, Marjorie Burns, began ETS Laboratories in 1978.

The core laboratory is located in St. Helena, Calif., and three satellite labs are located in Sonoma, Calif., Walla Walla, Wash., and McMinnville in Oregon.

While Burns said the Umpqua Valley industry is smaller than the other wine regions, he sees potential.

“It's a promising and emerging region and we would like to participate in the growth of the region,” he said. “It's not at the scale of McMinnville or even Walla Walla but the promise is certainly there.”

This is ETS Laboratories' modus operandi, according to a UCC press release that stated the company is “known for getting in on the ground floor and helping the industry surrounding its lab to grow.”

Local vintners and UCC officials are pleased by the news.

“Where they set up shop is a plus for that region,” said Scott Henry, owner of Henry Estate Winery in Umpqua, in a press release. “They're going to make money. It's a great plus for our industry in general.”

Students come to UCC's viticulture and enology program from Lane, Douglas, Jackson, Josephine, Klamath, Coos and Curry counties, and the press release said ETS will extend its services to those counties, too.

“ETS is as good as it gets,” said John Quinones, the winemaker for RoxyAnne Winery and Vineyards of Medford, in the press release. “Gordon Burns is cutting edge.”

Burns said the collaboration with UCC offers the company and college a unique opportunity to dovetail resources and support each other.

In the press release, UCC President Blaine Nisson echoed Burns.

“ETS will be a direct benefit to SOWI and our plans to serve the industry. Obviously ETS understands the great growth potential of the wine industry in Southern Oregon,” he said. “This agreement is testimony to the quality of instruction and services the Southern Oregon Wine Institute at UCC is providing to the people and industry of a seven-county southern Oregon region.”

UCC Foundation President Dennis O'Neill said the silent stage of the \$8 million capital

campaign for the SOWI facility is nearing an end and the public portion is expected to begin in the next few months.

The SOWI facility is planned to be a 24,000 square-foot building set at the campus' entrance. It will hold the lab and all the teaching facilities, as well as serve as an event center.

O'Neill said the silent stage is where fundraisers attempt to identify or get promises for half the capital funds from large donors or through grant agencies before asking for community support.

He said he could not comment on exact figures, but they are very close to the \$4 million mark.