

Ocean County Vocational Technical School

Working in the Field

Sharing Success Stories



Student: Paul O'Neill

OCVTS Program: Culinary Arts

Instructors: Dennis Melia and Norm Gertner

Employer: Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA

Class of: 1997

Center: Brick

High School: Lacey Township

Universities : Stockton and LaSalle

In Paul's own words... OCVTS provided me with a direction and training that I did not have from my home school. Between the experiential learning opportunities rooted in application, the job networks via different partners/employers, and the safe learning environment provided by the skilled instructors, I gained the necessary skills and proficiency to be successful. I often look back at my time there fondly and think of it as a great springboard into the industry in which I still currently work.



Learning a trade enabled me to further pursue a higher education while still working and expanding my professional opportunities. I was fortunate to spend eight years with the Vetri Family of restaurants; four of which were flagship nationally acclaimed restaurants. All the while, earning a Master's Degree in Education. Being surrounded by mostly culinary school graduates, I realized the head start that I received at OCVTS and the benefits that came along with it.

My future goals are to enroll in a doctoral program for education. I am looking forward to eventually contemporize and relegitimize culinary and hospitality education to better supply the industry with an able workforce, all while attempting to improve industry standards and practices.

To the high school student population, I would like to share a few comments. Never get overwhelmed by the end goal. The journey is far greater than the destination. Every experience, good and bad, is all part of the evolution, so take each of them one by one along the way.

Having a solid foundation of baking, cooking, and then making the transition to the front-of-house service made me a valuable employee that increased my marketability. The three branches of the OCVTS Culinary Arts Program laid the groundwork through its curricula.

I have changed roles at the school and have become the assistant clinical professor. My previous role on the administrative staff side was the director of hospitality operations, which in short was akin to a general manager of a restaurant. I also taught service classes for our Lunch and Fine Dining class. Currently, I am a full-time faculty member for Hospitality Management, teaching the aforementioned classes, as well as Wine and Spirits, Event Planning, and Beverage Management. I am also vice-chair of the Philly Chef Conference, which brings together national and local restaurant and food/beverage professionals for a two-day conference of lectures, demonstrations, and moderated panel discussions. We are entering our fifth year and have been able to have a wide array of renowned professionals join us in years past including: Harold McGee, Alon Shaya, and Eric Asimov to name a few.

"Paul O'Neill is a graduate of our Culinary Arts Program. After completing college and obtaining his master's degree from Stockton College and LaSalle University, Paul is now a professor at Drexel University for Hospitality Management. The culinary staff at OCVTS are excited for Paul and we congratulate him on his success," stated Chef Kevin Musto, Culinary Instructor at OCVTS.