

CAREER PROFILES

By Jennifer McGuire, MASCA President

This is the final article in my series from last school year of profiles on career opportunities, selected from a workshop I attended entitled “Careers Your Students Need to Know About” at the 2017 ASCA conference. The session on careers paths in safety was sponsored by the Board of Certified Safety Professionals. The BCSP, whose sole purpose is to certify safety professionals, is recognized as the leader in high quality credentialing for safety, health and environmental practitioners.

Not everyone knows what a being a safety professional entails. In practice, safety professionals make assessments to determine risks at

worksites, assess potential hazards, evaluate risks and hazard control measures, prepare emergency response plans and investigate incidents. Safety professionals may also be involved in hazard recognition, hazardous materials management, and environmental protection, for example. The purpose of this industry is to prevent events that may result in injury, illness, damage, or environmental harm.

Interestingly, there are multiple ways to enter and grow within this field, some more deliberate than others. As we work with students around post-secondary planning, it may be useful to be familiar with some of the options:

-Safety and Health Degrees: Some individuals may enter the field by pursuing a bachelor’s or master’s degree in safety. It is possible to start with an associate degree in safety, or a related field.

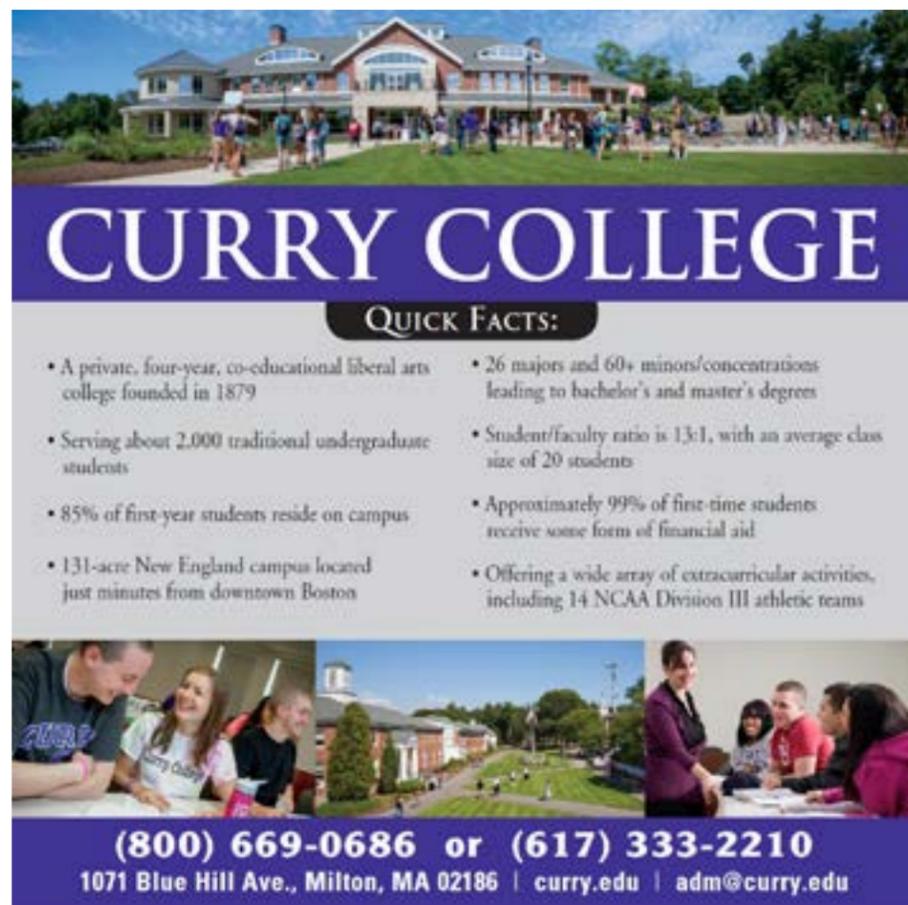
-Safety by Assignment: It is often the case that an individual becomes involved with safety because they have been assigned by their employer to some sort of safety responsibility, either as part of their job or as part of a committee.

-Craft-to-Professional: In certain cases, a person becomes involved in safety through a leadership role. As a supervisor, they may be responsible for the safety of others and through advancement may become a safety professional.

-Safety by Experience: And finally, in cases where an individual was part of an incident where they or others were injured or became ill. As a result, the individual may be motivated to pursue safety as a career field.

To become a Certified Safety Professional, a bachelor’s degree is required in any field or an associate degree in safety, health or environment, along with additional work experience. In our work with high school students, we will likely recommend students with an interest safety careers to pursue a degree. A search for such programs on a typical search engine, such as the Massachusetts Career Information System, is challenging because of the many different programs of study. However, the BCSP maintains a user-friendly database, www.bcspp.org/Resources/Academic-Database1,

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that enables you to search by state for safety-related programs. There are programs at four community colleges within Massachusetts, two related to fire science and two related to environmental, and four four-year institutions. Many of the programs in Massachusetts are at the Master’s Degree or Doctoral Degree level.

Keene State College in New Hampshire offers a Bachelor’s Degree in Safety and Occupational Health Applied Science. The college’s website provides clear information regarding the program outcomes and career opportunities. The program is described as “hands-on” and “practical”, with students on-site in real world experiences.

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—Jean Atwater-Williams