

THE FIX

A TRADES CONVERSATION

HOSTED BY **Oatey**

Guests: Lisa Alessandro & Alicia Chet, Remington College

Run Time: 22 minutes, 26 seconds

Questions or Feedback: thefix@oatey.com

00:00:05 **Katherine Lehtinen**

Welcome to The Fix, the podcast made for the trades, where we sit down with inspiring individuals across the trades to discuss their unique take on the industry, including career paths, job site stories, overcoming challenges, and everything in between. I'm your host, Katherine, a marketer here at Oatey with my co-host and friend, Doug, one of Oatey's resident experts in all things trades. The Fix is more than a podcast. It's a community, a community built to support tradespeople and inspire the next generation of essential pros. Let's start the conversation.

00:00:44 **Katherine Lehtinen**

All right, Doug, I'm telling you, we have a dynamic duo in studio today that are helping shape the trades landscape in Cleveland. Absolutely.

00:00:54 **Doug Buchan**

Everything about today's show is big, Katherine. We have in-house guests, okay? I even showered today for that, okay? Thank goodness. We have two guests in house at the same time. The organization that they represent, I mean, it's just phenomenal. We talk about the women in the trades and we have multiple trade experiences through this group. I'm just out of breath.

00:01:17 **Katherine Lehtinen**

I love it. Well, hey, I wanted to welcome both Lisa and Alicia from Remington College.



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00:01:23 **Alicia Chet**

Thank you for having us. Thank you.

00:01:25 **Katherine Lehtinen**

Absolutely. Well, I would like to start off with both of you kind of giving us a little bit of your background and how you ended up at Remington College and what your responsibility is there today.

00:01:36 **Lisa Alessando**

Sure. I'm Lisa Alessandro. I'm the campus president at Remington. And I ended up there back in 2004, first off, in a little bit of a funny way. My bachelor's degree is in broadcast journalism. When I was looking to get out of that, they were advertising for sports -minded individuals. So, that's how I ended up there. Not really related to sports in any way, but then moved my way through over the course of time, left for a short time period, and then came back. So, I've been there off and on for about 20 years.

00:02:17 **Alicia Chet**

Wow, that's amazing. All right, Alicia, how about you? Yes, I started with Remington College basically right out of my own college career. I graduated within six months. At that point in time it was a little ad in a newspaper and I got a random phone call on my house phone and 22 years later I'm still here. I've worked in admissions the entire time from an admissions representative. I've been the director of admissions now for over 15 years. Very excited to help students change their lives. I'm the first one that a student talks to when they're interested in doing something different. When they're interested in making a change and I help them all the way through the process to figure out

00:02:54 **Katherine Lehtinen**

what could be a good fit for them. That's wonderful. You know, can either one of you kind of give us a little bit about kind of the program that's around the trades and what prepares students for the challenges of the modern trades

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00:03:06 **Lisa Alessando**

industry? Sure, I mean all of our programs are considered trades. I think most relevant to you guys here would be our construction and building maintenance program and then we just recently kicked off a welding program as well. Okay,

00:03:23 **Katherine Lehtinen**

Great. And how long has that program been a part of Remington College?

00:03:28 **Lisa Alessando**

Construction building maintenance has been about five years. Welding just started in April of this year.

00:03:34 **Katherine Lehtinen**

Okay. So very recent. Awesome. Maybe Alicia, you can talk to us a little bit about then what helps prepare students for, you know, going into the trades at Remington.

00:03:45 **Alicia Chet**

So we focus on the big picture. We focus on what they can see themselves doing in the long run. So when I'm talking to students about our construction and building maintenance program, I talk to them about, do they like working with their hands? Do they like taking things apart and putting them back together? Do they have a desire to want to be a problem solver and a troubleshooter? So a lot of the students that I talk to about construction and building maintenance, they have interest in, ooh, well, I like electrical because I like making sure that I've got a good speaker system in my car, or I like plumbing because there's always something dripping around the house and you never know what it is that needs to be fixed. So having those people that have a desire to make a difference, a lot of them want to be the problem solvers for family members and friends who are always having problems around the house. But a lot of them know that there's good opportunities within the trades in the employment

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00:04:37 **Alicia Chet**

opportunities. And with being a career college, our focus is not just assisting students with gaining the education they need, but we also assist our students with getting placed into their field of study. so helping them to look at that end result from the beginning is what we do.

00:04:52 **Katherine Lehtinen**

Yeah, well so how do you believe education plays in changing the perceptions and overcoming common misconceptions about the careers and the

00:05:01 **Lisa Alessando**

trades? I think it's so important nowadays you know you don't need to have that traditional degree to get a decent job in a field that you enjoy and a traditional education isn't for everybody. A lot of times we end up having students come to us that have tried a more traditional route and realize that's not really for them. So, you know, we help them find something that they can be successful in in a very short amount of time. All of our programs are eight or nine months in length. And then, like Alicia mentioned, you know, offering that career assistance at their completion as well.

00:05:45 **Katherine Lehtinen**

So let's talk about what are those eight or nine months look like at Remington under this program?

00:05:51 **Alicia Chet**

So the nice part about Remington College being a career college and focusing on the exact career fields is our students, they don't have to take any of those general education classes. They don't have to take math or English or psychology, which a lot of times that turns individuals off and that just lengthens the amount of time that they're in school. So our programs are broken down month by month by month and each month a student is here with us they are focusing on a different area of these trades. So we have one month that is focusing on

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basic electrical, we have one month focus on basic carpentry, we have a couple of months focusing on electrical from both the residential and commercial side of things. Plumbing is a big part of how we bring all of this together because HVAC is a big component of our program. So plumbing comes into play with HVAC, comes into play with appliances, so month by month by month we're focusing on all of these different areas to make sure at the end of the

00:06:48 **Alicia Chet**

nine months our students are ready out ready to get out there and start working in their field of study. Okay, so how do students find

00:06:55 **Katherine Lehtinen**

out about Remington College? How do they come to you? Is it through family members? Is it through a friend of mine? How is it that they kind of show up at

00:07:06 **Alicia Chet**

your doorstep. Actually, that's exactly what I was just doing before we came here today. I had an individual apply for one of our programs and he sent his best friend to me as soon as he got home. So now we've got this duo who's going to be a part of our programs. I have helped fathers and daughters, boyfriends, girlfriends, sisters, best friends. So that is the most successful way that we are able to help students with starting school here. And then a lot of it is social media and the Internet. You know, the World Wide Web is something that brings us a lot of students who are interested in making a change. So when you're scrolling and when you're clicking that is what's bringing most students to Remington College above that friends and family. Yeah I love the fact

00:07:49 **Doug Buchan**

that you know the curriculum is only gonna take me nine months to get through you know so I'm not gonna get overwhelmed with this multi-year facet right but question for you you know when you're learning a trade

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obviously I can look at a lot of things in a book I can look at a lot of pictures and I can pick information from that. What does Remington do to get me some hands -on experience? And who do you, you know, put me with as a partner so that they're

00:08:16 **Alicia Chet**

monitoring and mentoring me for that? So the amazing thing about our instructors at Remington College is they are professionals in their industry. They have over five years of experience in any one of these industries. Our lead instructor, Ron Sherbin, he has been a professional in HVAC for over 25 plus years and he's been with our program here at Remington College for over eight years now. We have another instructor, Mr. Alex, who he is a veteran and spent 13 years in working with the military, traveling to different countries, building bases from the ground up, working with building schools and hospitals and clinics. And then Mr. Earl, he has worked within residential maintenance and then he moved up to working in the commercial lines. He went back to school to get an HVAC certification, knowing that having additional trade certifications was important. So they are learning from people who have done this work. And we have a very hands -on school, very hands -on lab, where students are

00:09:18 **Alicia Chet**

practicing those skills. So 10 to 12 hours each week, students are on campus actually doing those things. They're learning how to wire a house from a box throughout with the switches and the outlets and the lighting. They're learning how to work with the plumbing for gas lines or water lines for a hot water tank, or learning how to hook those things up for the furnace and air conditioning systems, or not just getting water where it needs to go, but getting it away is one of the things I learned about plumbing.

00:09:47 **Katherine Lehtinen**

Almost just as important.

00:09:50 **Doug Buchan**

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Yes. So the individuals then that you pair them up with as the instructors, you give them the hands on, do you ever get them out to actual facilities where, you know, that's a potential job placement for them someday so they can be introduced to, say, that operations manager for a large complex or something. The goal is always to get our students

00:10:13 **Lisa Alessando**

in front of employers as much as possible, whether it's having them in as guest speakers, to do mock interviews, or out on field trips as well. That's such an important component for us is to have them meeting with those individuals and And just giving them that opportunity, you know, they can hear things from us or the instructors over and over. But actually hearing it firsthand from an employer as to this is what we're looking for, it sometimes can hold a little bit more weight and, you know, oh yeah, I really need to listen to my instructor and do what they say so I can get this awesome job when I'm finished.

00:10:58 **Doug Buchan**

Sure. One last question from me. What is Remington's secret sauce to get those females interested in these programs? You know because you know that's what the fix is about. We want to keep the trades moving but we want to empower you know the ladies to get into the trades. And that's something that I focus on when I

00:11:16 **Alicia Chet**

talk to individuals because again I'm kind of one of the first contacts along with an admissions representative, Miss Caitlin, that I work with. Remington College we have programs like medical assisting and dental assisting as well which is a primarily more female -based industries. So when I speak with students, I make sure that they are not just focused on one thing in the beginning, that they understand all of the different program options we have. And as I take students on tours of our campus, and they see the building, and they see the environment, and they see all of the pipes that we have laying around, and the wires for electrical, and they see all of the different HVAC systems, and they see the lumber built into structures at our campus, they get excited. And females do understand that this is something that is offering them a lot of opportunities. One of our current

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students, she works in the industry doing maintenance for an apartment complex already. And one of the reasons she's

00:12:07 **Alicia Chet**

coming back to school is to further her skills and to get a specific certification. But she says that she has residents who specifically ask for her, that females are more comfortable having her in their homes, in their apartment, above having a male there. That they're more comfortable, that she's easier to talk to, that they don't feel as concerned when they have to call to get something done. So that's awesome to see. That is awesome. Yeah and she talks to a lot of the incoming students. We have a lot of students who work in different aspects of the industry but they're coming to our school to gain knowledge and some of the other trades within this program. So they're really great at helping each

00:12:44 **Katherine Lehtinen**

other as well. So what's the approach for keeping up on curriculum? I mean we know everything is changing at such a fast pace and rate. Also there's codes that different one city to the next or one municipality to the next. How do you guys tackle managing, updating, and maintaining your curriculum? So that's actually how

00:13:04 **Lisa Alessando**

Doug and I first got connected. We do have yearly program advisory committee meetings for all of our programs. It starts out at a beginning level before we even begin a new program. We get industry feedback from professionals as to, this is what we're looking at doing, how does this sound, what are we missing, you know, what still needs to be included, and then we do that on a yearly basis as our programs continue. So that's really important to us and it's a great chance for us to touch base with these employers, not only through that, and then you know, we welcome employers back for other events throughout the year as well with job fairs and the other things I mentioned earlier. Great. So what's next

00:13:53 **Katherine Lehtinen**

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on the horizon for Remington College? Where do you see the programs going? Where do you see growth happening within the Cleveland market? So construction and

00:14:04 **Lisa Alessando**

building maintenance is one of our largest programs right now. Welding, like I mentioned, just started in April. That could very quickly overtake everybody else. We started culinary in November as well and then we have some other things on the horizon that we can't talk about yet. Stay tuned, right? Stay tuned, exactly. So yeah, we're definitely looking to expand and grow into the end of this year in 2025. Okay, so there is

00:14:36 **Katherine Lehtinen**

one location east side of Cleveland or in Cleveland? We're in Maple Heights. Okay, excellent. So pretty central and easy to get to for everyone. Yeah, right off 480. We've been there for about

00:14:48 **Lisa Alessando**

30 years at this point. One main building now, some people were used to seeing another building from the freeway. We're still there, just because we're not that sign you can see from the freeway. We're still there on Broadway and Maple Heights.

00:15:06 **Alicia Chet**

In Remington College, we do have 12 campuses across the country. Our main campus is in Dallas, Texas, and we have schools all the way from Houston, Dallas. We have schools in Memphis and Nashville and Baton Rouge and Lafayette. So a lot of our campuses are down south. We're the northernmost campus here in Ohio. We're the ones who get all four seasons, not a lot of our other campuses do, which is great for people in the trades because not only do we have those fun things in the winter like pipes freezing that we're going to need plumbing for,

00:15:36 **Katherine Lehtinen**

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but everything in between. So is there any online opportunities or is everything in person

00:15:42 **Alicia Chet**

for students? So throughout all of our campuses, all of our programs are hybrid where students are able to complete 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The theory, the concepts, the core information for the course, they're able to access on their own from anywhere to be able to complete tests and quizzes and assignments. But then for all of our programs, they do have scheduled lab days with hours they must complete on campus for all of the hands -on work. And then Remington College, one of our campuses is an online based campus that there are a few select programs that students can complete 100 % online from anywhere in

00:16:19 **Katherine Lehtinen**

the U.S. Sure. Well and it would make sense if you're in culinary or if you are doing hair or if you were a plumber you need to put your hands on the

00:16:28 **Alicia Chet**

product and what you're doing. Absolutely and a lot of the students that I talk to that's what they want. A lot of people what they tell me is I learn best by working hands -on. I need to practice. I need somebody to show me. I need somebody to see me. And I obviously make sure students understand up front that yes, you will be able to do all of those things hands -on, but you need to understand the concepts and you need to understand why you're doing certain things. Like when we're brazing copper pipes together and it's, you know, a blow torch and fire that you're working with, you need to understand why you're doing that. You need to understand the safety behind it. So safety is always first. That's one of the first classes our students take in both construction and building maintenance and welding. But yes, definitely that hands -on is a big part of it all.

00:17:12 **Katherine Lehtinen**

I would love both of your perspective. We've been talking a lot about, because you've been at Remington College for over 20 years, both of you, but we've talked a lot about the trades and the needs of getting people

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into the trades because of the retirement age and not as many people. As you have seen it over the years, does it make you hopeful for the future and the trades,

00:17:33 **Lisa Alessando**

or do you feel like we still have a lot of work to do? I think it's very hopeful. I think it's a lot less commonplace now to say, hey, I need to go to school for the traditional four -year degree. I think there's so much potential for the growth of the trades. And with the students I talk to on

00:17:57 **Alicia Chet**

a daily basis, it is something that not all of our students are traditional students. Some of those students may have had to leave high school early and they received their GED. Some students are retiring from one job and they still have lots of years to work and they want to get fast training for a specific industry. So yes, it is exciting that nowadays there's not that four -year art history degree or you know a six -year psychology degree that you might not be able to find a job in. At least with some of these traits that our students are learning at Remington College, specifically within construction and building maintenance, they are able to find jobs on their own. So yes, it is our goal to help place them out there with an employer and help them with their job search, but there's jobs that they can be doing for friends and family. And once you start doing a good job with that first job, people talk and they're going to get referrals. And, you know, I know 2020 and COVID was a few

00:18:51 **Alicia Chet**

years back now, but those contractors and all those people who who were sitting around their houses, they started doing a lot of remodeling and that's still continuing. I know I tried to get work done during that point in time and I had to wait six to eight months just for something. So even now that continues. And as much as 2020 was horrible for so much of the world, I think for trades and for people with these hands -on skills that it definitely put a big spotlight on, hey, this is really important. We really need these people. I don't think that plumbers were sitting at home during 2020. Absolutely not. They could not even keep up. Exactly. So that proves

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where the demand needs to be are those people who weren't able to do their job remote and who do need to be out on the roads day to day to help those customers and

00:19:36 **Katherine Lehtinen**

clients that need them. Anything additional about Remington College that you want to highlight that maybe we didn't talk or cover today that our

00:19:44 **Lisa Alessando**

listeners should know about? I just like to focus on, you know, the fact that we are so student -centered. That's one of our primary focuses, part of our mission. We really like the campus to feel like family for our students and you know Alicia mentioned earlier social media. You really get a feel for that when you look at the Remington College Cleveland campus social media, which I think is important too because if you feel comfortable somewhere you're going to school, no matter how tough of a day you might be having outside of the classroom, at least you know you can come to school and still make it a positive day. So we really focus on making a difference and making a positive difference in our students lives. Yeah, that's nice. It's

00:20:42 **Alicia Chet**

exciting just to help students from start to finish. One of the things that we make sure that students understand is that we're not just here to help you start school, we're here to help you graduate. Because a lot of people with a lot of parts of their lives, it is easy to give up. And we want to make sure that students understand that this isn't something that when times get tough that you're gonna be on your own to figure it out. We are here to help you, we are here to support you, we're here to help you get past those obstacles because we want you to graduate. We want you to be out there working in your field of study. And And I think just having that support and having that system of people there cheering you on is huge. So if it comes down to Remington College, yes, very student -centered and very community -based as well. Remington College, as Lisa mentioned, for over 30 years have been in Maple Heights. We're right here in Cleveland. It's a great opportunity for students who graduated

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00:21:38 **Alicia Chet**

with our school 20 years ago to now have their children come to school and actually have somebody I just met with last night is a female who graduated from our medical assisting program over 20 years ago, and her daughter's now starting in our culinary program. And that just shows what Remington College is all about, that people remember. People remember their experience. People remember those positive things. And I think that's the biggest compliment we can get. If somebody has their child, that will come to us because of how great it was for them.

00:22:07 **Katherine Lehtinen**

Yeah. Well, excellent. Well, thank you both for your time today. We appreciate it. It was great to learn a little bit more about Remington College. I'm excited whenever we can talk about the secrets and the stuff that's coming next because that's always exciting and fun. But thank you. Thank you. You're welcome. Thank you. Thanks.