Cabinet drilling fluid engineer Frank Eakes, left, and field supervisor Charles Welker give a guest lecture on drilling fluid, better known as mud, to students at Lackawanna College’s School of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

TAPPING INTO A NEW FIELD
Students hope opportunity at Lackawanna yields high-paying jobs

BY BRANDON GIBBONS
NEW MIL福德 TWP. — It’s a normal Wednesday at Lackawanna College’s School of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

Students and faculty talk about the career opportunities in the gas industry and what the school is offering.

“The drilling fluid used to keep pockets of gas from blowing up out of the ground and keeps cuttings back to the surface is really exciting,” said first-year student Ana Levy, a Mahanoy City native.

Students take a tour of the school’s new rig and equipment.

The roughly 30 students in this class know they’ll be leaving here in less than two months and heading into class.

They’ll take what they’ve learned back to their companies and become part of the Marcellus Shale in Northeast Pennsylvania.

“Talks with oil and gas companies last month led to an open position — a two-year program that helps technical school students learn the ropes of the industry,” said college president Mark Volk, chief academic officer Jill Murray, and academic officer Erica Barone-Pricci, Ph.D. They’ve been reaching out to companies to start a job bank for students.

Companies like Williams, Talisman Energy Inc., and others have contributed, too. They’ve donated $2.5 million last year, $1 million as an endowment, but also donated a special niche — at least enough to get this school up and running.

“We react to what we think is best for students and faculty,” said Volk. “It’s a hands-on learning environment with support and compassion from the full-time faculty.

If you want to protect,” they really care about their family or business or whatever they’re doing.

They’ll use this equipment in their studies is applying his knowledge to the untrained eye, well pads, vents, tanks and engines. The equipment now makes sense to him, and he can explain it to others.

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