

# Bridging fun to learning

Special to The Daily Courier

As day breaks on Okanagan College's 27th annual spaghetti bridge competition, a renewed interest in engineering and applied science technologies is being exhibited.

The competition challenges students to design and build structures using spaghetti and glue.

Success in the competition requires students to be accurate, analytical and exact, but organizers and sponsors recognize the bigger picture — the competition provides an educational platform for youth that spans cultures and connects fun with learning.

"The kids may not know it, but they are learning about engineering technology principles as they create their bridges," said John Leech, executive director of Applied Science Technologists and Technicians of



Leech

B.C., the title sponsor of the event. "Before starting to build their bridge, they must think about the best way to put it together so that it will carry a small load and, even though they may not know it, this gets into engineering design principles. Learning by doing while having fun — a great formula for success."

The college has been hosting the challenge for nearly three decades. But now, students are benefiting from the strong ties between industry and education.

"We understand the importance of introducing students to career paths at an early age," said Douglas MacLeod, associate dean of science, technology and health. "This event brings students on campus and gives them a taste of what it is like to be at a post-secondary institution and just how many opportunities

there are to learn about things that are interesting, challenging and fun."

Spaghetti bridge draws participants from as far away as Hungary and Iran. The college hosts a number of other engineering events throughout the year. The department of Electronic Engineering hosts elementary and secondary school age students at its annual technology competition, RoboCup. Okanagan College civil engineering students compete in the Western Canada catapult competition, which they've won two of three years.

"These are fantastic events," said Leech. "They're exciting to watch, fun to participate in and really do build bridges for students to share knowledge and explore the opportunities that exist in science, math and technology."

The spaghetti bridge competition will get underway at the KLO campus of Okanagan College at 10 a.m. The title event is set for 1 p.m. in the college's lecture theatre.