



PRECISE CARGO: Precise Manigault, a Wando graduate, operates cranes at the SC Ports Authority. "My favorite part is all the cool things we load or unload from the ship. We handle a lot break-bulk pieces and it is pretty cool stuff," Manigault said; photo by j. grech

a level ABOVE

Graduate thrives as crane operator at SC Ports Authority

Precise Manigault clocks in and steps into a cramped elevator along with a handful of his coworkers. The shaky ride up takes about one minute, during which he double-checks his gear and ensures that his hard hat is secure on his head. He steps out of the elevator onto a metal grating, 155 feet above the hulking mass of a cargo ship piled with multicolored containers. For Manigault, this is just another day on the job.

"I'm a crane operator," Manigault, a 2011 graduate, said. "I take containers and other things on and off the ships."

Manigault spends his workday up in the cabin of one of the massive blue cranes that line the Wando terminal, maneuvering containers between the ships and shore.

"I love running cranes," Manigault said. "It's what gets me up every morning."

Manigault is one of many workers employed by the SC Ports Authority, an economic powerhouse that not only supplies a multitude of job opportunities to the local area and state, but also ensures that worldwide supply chains continue uninterrupted.

Though college can feel like an inevitability for many students, the port is just one example of the opportunities high

school graduates have outside of the rigorous and expensive endeavor of college—as well the potential to earn a good money without a college degree.

"For kids that don't want to go to college, or are nervous about getting in the workforce, I think it's a great job," Manigault said. "It can definitely be

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someone's career."

The leadership of the Ports Authority holds this as a key part of their philosophy. **Beverly Cowart**, senior vice president of talent solutions at SC Ports, oversees a wide variety of responsibilities pertaining to the hiring, training, and well-being of employees.

"The majority of our team leaders and managers were crane operators at one point. Many of them came right out of high school and learned," Cowart said. "They moved up in the organization and now they're leading others, so there's a lot of

opportunity for high school graduates."

SC Ports is somewhat unique in its philosophy of hiring new employees based not on a lengthy resume, but the latent attributes of a good worker.

"The majority of the people who work at the different terminals of the port don't have a degree," Cowart said. "It just shows that skilled, hard-working people who want to do a good job are what we're interested in."

Crane operation requires nerves of steel, with workers having to regularly perform duties at harrowing heights with only a pane of glass between them and the ground. Regardless, Manigault rarely gets anxious on the job.

"I'm honestly used to the height. The only time I really get nervous is maybe when the weather is bad," Manigault said. "With anything over 30 mile per hour winds, you can really feel the crane rocking."

With opportunities to move up the ladder, good wages, and a vibrant work environment, Manigault views work at the port as a viable alternative to college.

"I think it's a great job," Manigault said. "It's a career that pretty much has any opportunity you could ask for."

**Story by Ethan Young
Designer Hope Lanier**

POST-grad plans

Wando seniors share after graduation plans as they prep for life after high school



WORKING ABROAD: (far left) **Dirk Cavanaugh**, 12, works in Costa Rica this school year as a virtual student before graduating. "I'm going to take a gap year and spend most of the year living in Costa Rica on my own. I think I'll learn more working on my own than paying for college when I'm not sure yet what I want to do," Cavanaugh said; photo by d. cavanaugh

FUTURE ENTREPRENEUR: (left) **Gage Lapsley**, 12, works at her part time job at Brown Fox Coffee. "I plan to work for other bakeries or cafes and make their pastries for them until I'm ready to start my own business. After graduation I plan to stay at my current job at Brown Fox coffee, but I also am going to try and find a bakery that I can intern at so I can learn from other people," Lapsley said; photo by a scruggs

10% of Wando graduates go straight into the workforce

4 Pre-professional tracks offered at Wando

\$20 million and more awarded in scholarships to 2020 graduating class

43 POST-GRAD