

# Oaksterdam University: The Future of the Cannabis Industry



On August 15th through 17th, the RI Convention Center will be home to a rare three-day seminar presented by Oaksterdam University and hosted by the legendary Todd McCormick. During this program, Grow Medicine, Todd will discuss his personal history in the industry, commercial cultivation and the future of the cannabis industry. This event promises to be both informative and entertaining. Visit the Oaksterdam University website: [oaksterdamuniversity.com](http://oaksterdamuniversity.com) or Todd's site at [hemp.xxx](http://hemp.xxx) for event specifics and registration information.

To truly comprehend the significance of this event, however, one must first understand the two major players bringing this presentation to the East Coast. Oaksterdam University is the first university of its kind formed in the US. Founded in 2007 by Richard Lee, OU was modeled after Cannabis College in Amsterdam, where the primary focus of the curriculum was horticulture. Unlike Cannabis College, Richard recognized the potential for a booming industry that expanded beyond growing cannabis. When Oaksterdam was founded, Richard introduced courses in cannabis trade, politics, history and legal issues to offer students a broader scale of knowledge and a better chance to succeed in what could be the next big industry in our country.

Since 2007, Oaksterdam University has provided quality training about cannabis and marijuana policy reform for over 17,000 students at several US campuses. "The institution offers the chance to learn about this controversial plant, and creates an interesting blend of individuals and opportunity," said Dale Sky Jones, Executive Chancellor. "OU welcomes diverse students who are looking to change careers; some simply want to brush up on their horticulture skills. OU also attracts business owners who want to train their staff, folks who want to open their own business, and patients simply trying to understand the law and their rights. More and more baby boomers are discovering they would rather smoke pot than reach for pharmaceuticals."

Seven years later, OU has become the pioneer in addressing the growing needs of the marijuana movement — from patients to regulators — and has compiled an impressive academic staff, that includes some of the most recognized names in the cannabis industry. Their goal is to remove the stigma associated with the cannabis industry and provide the necessary knowledge and training to make it a respected and acceptable career path.

The second major player to participate in this event is presenter Todd McCormick. Todd started growing marijuana in 1984 to combat the side effects of cancer treatments. Between the ages of 2 and 10, Todd underwent long-term chemotherapy and radiotherapy treatments, and had nine major operations in his fight against a rare disease called Histiocytosis X. When his mother feared that he

would not survive a new tumor in the soft tissue next to his heart, she decided to give him some marijuana medicinally. Todd was 9 years old at the time, and his mother's decision saved and changed his life.

Since 1994, Todd has been an activist, publicist and researcher of cannabis. He collaborated with Jack Herer on the ground-breaking book, *The Emperor Wears No Clothes*. In the mid-90s he lived in Amsterdam, where he became one of the first 10 patients in The Netherlands to receive a prescription for medicinal marijuana. Best-selling author Peter McWilliams brought McCormick back to California in 1997 in order to write his first book: *How to Grow Medical Marijuana*. That summer, the DEA raided Todd's Bel Air home and destroyed all the legal plants on the premises; years of work and rare genetics were lost forever. After a three-year-long legal battle, Todd was denied a medical necessity defense in federal court and imprisoned for five years. His only crime was growing and studying the medicine that saved his life.

There is no blueprint for what these pioneers of the cannabis industry are trying to accomplish in our country. Every day is a new learning experience where we must conquer new hurdles. We must master the art of not only growing and cultivating the marijuana plant, but also the art of regulating and refining the distribution and sale of these products. The best way to approach this industry is to set up for success but prepare for the worst. With people like Todd McCormick and organizations like Oaksterdam University, opportunities to do so are becoming more plentiful.