



Students at West Albany and South Albany high schools can now earn a free year of community college if they meet high school graduation requirements in four years. [Sign up for more stories to read later.](#)



NEW!

By [Betsy Hammond | The Oregonian/OregonLive](#)

[Redmond High](#)

,

[West Albany High](#)

and

[Dallas High](#)

are among Oregon schools where students are encouraged to sign up for a fifth year -- that's really a first year of community college.

The state continues to pay the host school district about \$6,500 per student, and the district in turn uses the money to pay for three terms of community college tuition, fees and books, making the year free for students.

The district ends up with enough left to hire a counselor or adviser to guide the first-year college students, monitoring their grades, helping them enroll each term and advising them about careers.

Advertisement

The idea is that by easing students' transition and making the first year free, high schools get more students to try college and more to stick with it, said Frank Caropelo, assistant superintendent of [Greater Albany Schools](#), which launched the program in partnership with Linn-Benton Community College this school year.

"That is moving the dial on 40-40-20," the state's goal of having 40 percent of young adults earn four-year degrees and another 40 percent earn two-year degrees or industry-recognized credentials, Caropelo said.

In Dallas, where a similar program has operated in partnership with Chemeketa Community College for about seven years, more than one-third of students in the class of 2013 are taking part.

The Oregonian



Find your school

»

[See the graduation rate for your school](#)

Many who sign up are the first in their families to try college, and they value the hands-on help from Chemeketa officials and Dallas High's coordinator, said Brian Green, assistant principal at Dallas High.

More than three-fourths who enroll complete a full year of community college, Green said.

Students' favorite thing about the program is that it's free, said Danielle Blackwell, who coordinates it in Albany. Their least: that they have to get a progress report each term from each instructor for their high school. But, she said, they acknowledge that having to talk to their college instructors and be held accountable for their grades is good, she said.

Advertisement



She said it's exciting for her, after years of teaching high school, to see students on the next trajectory.

"Nursing is a big. We've got some (aspiring) engineers. We've got a ton that want to do chemistry or biology and some that want to do journalism. We've got some who are passionate about art or music, but they're wondering that they are going to do with that. Some of them are deciding to minor in the arts but study business and merchandising."

-- Betsy Hammond

Note to readers: if you purchase something through one of our affiliate links we may earn a commission.

Around the Web

Surprising project 18 miles East of Disney in FL

A brand-new 56,000 sq ft new type of metropolis is being built and it'll likely make a lot of people very rich. Learn how you can get in.

Investing Outlook | Sponsored

"Move your money by early 2022," Wall street legend warns