My View: Bond keeps future in sight for students

When Marissa Powell graduated from high school in 2009, she had already earned 94 college credits at Clackamas Community College. She was nearly halfway toward her bachelor’s degree at Texas A&M University.

CCC offers early college credit opportunities to students who attend high school in the county, saving thousands of dollars on the cost of a four-year degree. Students like Marissa can earn credits while still in high school through dual enrollment or through the Advanced College Credit program. These credits are transferable to all Oregon public colleges and universities.

Marissa chose both options. She was dually enrolled at CCC while a high school student at Clackamas Middle College. She also earned college credits through ACC, a program that allows the college district to grant college credit for certain approved courses for a minimal fee. Either choice leads to substantial savings for students and families.

Students who earn college credits while in high school are more likely to attend college after graduating. Students gain confidence in their ability to find success in the college environment through early college options. Making the path to college easy and accessible will set more students up for success at a four-year university or in their career.

Community colleges are the go-to source for entry-level education and job training, serving about 30 percent of all students in higher education. Thousands of students begin their college education and training at Clackamas each year. As we approach our 50th anniversary in 2016, it’s our job to ensure our programs and classes remain accessible and relevant for the next 50 years.

One of the ways CCC can address these needs is to make the path to college even easier. CCC is proposing a bond measure for the Nov. 4 election that will add classrooms and lab space and modernize equipment for current industry training standards, especially in fields with high-demand careers, such as health care, engineering, electronics, automotive, manufacturing, welding and skilled trades and apprenticeship preparation.

The bond measure would also include funds to add technology tools to each of the high schools in the county. These new computers and digital tools will help more students enroll in online courses to give them a boost toward earning a college degree. It’s another way that CCC is working to ensure education and training is accessible and affordable for our community.

Making improvements to facilities and equipment for CCC students at high schools strengthens our partnerships with local schools and improves the quality of the dual credit programs we can offer. This early experience with college gives students an economic advantage and sets them up for further success as they continue to pursue their educational goals.

Greg Chaimov is chairman of the Clackamas Community College Board of Education.
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