



**Willamette**  
EDUCATION SERVICE DISTRICT

**Clackamas Community College  
High School Connections Program  
Equity Audit Final Report**



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# Executive Summary

Clackamas Community College High School Connections Program (HSC) and its partners received an Oregon Department of Education (ODE) funded Regional Promise Grant earlier this year. ODE has adopted the Equity Lens to ensure all Oregon students have equal access to Oregon's education opportunities; thus, an audit of its website and student engagement practices was in alignment with grant goals. High School Connections staff contracted with The Center for Education Innovation, Evaluation & Research (The Center) to conduct these audits.

The audit consisted of a review of the High School Connections website; focus groups with Clackamas Community College (Clackamas) Student Services staff, HSC staff, and staff from partner high schools and districts; and presentations of the findings to these audiences. The approach of The Center staff was to: 1) review the website for the presence of information that relates to students who are traditionally underrepresented in accelerated learning options as well as any content, policies, or procedures that might inadvertently exclude, discourage, or fail to encourage underrepresented students; 2) conduct focus groups to identify practices of the feeder programs in advertising and encouraging students to participate in accelerated learning options and their experiences with HSC; and 3) present the information back to the participating audiences to establish the veracity of the findings. This report is a summary of those findings.

**Note: technically, recruitment is the responsibility of Student Services, and HSC develops and provides accelerated learning options. High schools also are not responsible for recruiting students into these courses. Nonetheless, both HSC and high school programs share a responsibility for ensuring information about these opportunities are available to students, alert students to the benefits, and help guide them through the process. The Center staff were corrected about the use of the term "recruiting;" thus, this report will refer to engaging students in accelerated learning.**

Key findings were identified around relationships with partners, expectations around student independence, engagement of diverse students, disability access, website effectiveness, and registration and information sharing.

1. Participants in the focus groups indicated they had an excellent working relationship with HSC staff, and that staff would “bend over backwards” to assist them in providing opportunities to their students.
2. There was evidence of a difference in perception of how much students should be supported in accelerated learning programs: high school personnel were very involved with students and families, while HSC staff warned against this, wanting students to be independent and obtain a true taste of college expectations. This finding is not surprising and not specific to these institutions. This is also a prevalent issue in transition planning.
3. None of the participants believed they had access to records that would allow them to evaluate whether or not their traditionally underserved students were participating at rates equivalent to other students. Some programs were better at getting the word out to students in general and targeting underserved students specifically; only one program had clearly institutionalized the expectation that all students would graduate with a college course experience.
4. Programs did not address all underserved populations equally. There was confusion around the policies related to students with disabilities and the appropriateness of their participation in accelerated learning options.
5. Several issues were raised about the website, including the reading level, the difficulty of finding information, and the registration process.
6. Participants uniformly indicated they do not have access to information regarding which students have registered or what courses students have completed. This was especially concerning to counselors who assist students with programs of study and preparation for college.

It is the conclusion of this audit that while everyone is working towards the benefit of the students, there are several areas where improvements could be made to ensure that equitable access is intentionally institutionalized in both HSC and high school programs. The recommendations in this report focus on those that are actionable for the HSC for program improvement. Recommendations include:

1. Build on the positive relationships with partner programs. Provide information for them geared to underserved students, ideas about how to encourage students to participate, and developing a college-going mindset in general.
2. Work with schools to ensure that diverse students have peers they can interact with about their accelerated learning experiences. It would be helpful for students to have a “buddy” on campus, but also student leaders in the high schools who diverse students admire.
3. Work with schools to ensure they understand how to access current and past transcript information for students.

4. Work with schools to help them institutionalize the idea of earning accelerated credits before students graduate from high school.
5. Ensure all students can see themselves in HSC website representations. Especially, clarify with schools and on the website policies and procedures for students with disabilities.
6. Include feedback from your target audiences (high school students, their families, and high school programs) when revising the website. Ensure the language level is appropriate. Include success stories, question and answer areas, links and contacts for additional information. Include a clear statement about the benefits to students taking accelerated learning courses in terms of completing high school, accessing college, and career trajectories; information for parents about the different types of courses and the pros and cons; and how later student aid might be affected and how to avoid this issue.
7. Where possible and feasible, revise expectations about students functioning independently. For example, an intermediate step might be to provide a printable paper and pencil registration form so students can be responsible for collecting all the information they need, yet still be assisted in the guidance and on-line registration process.
8. Simplify how the website presents information about courses for students. Most schools are participating in accelerated learning programs with multiple institutions, further complicating a process that is already a challenge.
9. Because it is difficult for school personnel to identify students who qualify for free and reduced meals, provide clear information about how to access fee waivers and which courses provide them.
10. Address career paths in an informational section on the website. While not all students are interested in college degrees, careers do speak to them.
11. Work with Clackamas Community College Administration to implement any of several suggested equity audit rubrics to evaluate the institution as a whole.

While the information reported here are those findings that were consistent across groups, there are limitations to the findings. First, students, diverse or not, were not involved in this phase of the project. HSC is collecting information from participants and nonparticipating students through a survey. In addition, there was little visible diversity among the participants. While this is an accurate reflection of staffing in Oregon schools, more attention should have been given to having diverse voices in the groups. Finally, the information gleaned from the focus groups is a reflection of the members participating. Groups often were not clear on the purpose of the focus group or how they had been selected. Nonetheless, responses were uniform, and feedback during the presentation phase of this project helped to clarify misinformation.

# 1. Project Overview

Clackamas Community College has shown leadership in connecting high school students to college experiences. They offer five different accelerated learning programs, all offering college credit transcribed to Clackamas. Clackamas offers access to accelerated college credit at greatly reduced rates. For example, the Advanced College Credit (ACC) program charges students \$10/credit fee and waives the fee for students who qualify for the free and reduced meals program. As a community college, Clackamas does not have entrance requirements. Many students who attend Clackamas as a part of one of the HSC programs continue to attend after high school graduation, indicating the success of the program and the institution. Thus, the HSC program is available, attractive, and financially accessible to high school students throughout the districts participating in the Clackamas Regional Consortium.

Clackamas Community College High School Connections Program (HSC) and its Clackamas Promise partners received an Oregon Department of Education (ODE) funded Regional Promise Grant earlier this year. ODE has adopted the Equity Lens to ensure all Oregon students have equal access to Oregon's education opportunities. An audit of its website and student engagement practices was required as part of this funding. High School Connections staff contracted with the Willamette Education Service District's Center for Education Innovation, Evaluation & Research (The Center) to conduct these audits.

The first phase of the project included an audit of print materials, policies and practices, and websites to ensure that High School Connections outreach materials are culturally responsive to the community, families, and students. The Website Review provides the results of the examination of those materials.

In the second phase of this study, a series of focus groups was held. The stakeholders included college staff, and administration; high school administration; high school counselors and participating teachers; and transition and career counselors will help to highlight any barriers that policies, procedures, technology interfaces, and program information present as students and parents explore the possibility of the student participating in one of the High School Connections programs. This report follows the Website Review.

Finally, based on the results of the review and the focus groups, a session for college staff, leaders, and partners on the results of this evaluation was developed and presented. Evaluations of each workshop were conducted, and a summary report is provided following the Focus Group Report section.



# Accelerated Learning Benefits

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Accelerated learning programs support Oregon’s 40-40-20 and High School Success initiatives in a number of ways. According to the US Department of Education (2006), “Less than 20 credits by the end of the first calendar year of enrollment ... is a serious drag on degree completion. ...students enter higher education with a minimum of 6 additive credits to help them cross that 20-credit line. Six is good, 9 is better, and 12 is a guarantee of momentum.” Additional research has found that students in accelerated learning and AP courses, including those who have been underperforming, are 10% more likely than a comparison group to complete a bachelor’s degree, and 12% more likely as first generation college students (An, 2013). According to a study by AACRAO (American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers), 63% of colleges say completing accelerated learning courses improves the likelihood of the applicant being accepted to college (Kilgore & Taylor, 2016). Robin and Lujan (2017) suggest that in recognition of the evolving nature of today’s students, we do away with the idea of a “classic” or “traditional” student and come to terms with the fact that if 73% of college students can be labeled “non-traditional,” we need to recognize this shift and replace this concept with that of “contemporary student.” Otherwise, we risk marginalizing a large portion of our student body. In Swanson’s 2008 analysis of the impact of high school accelerated learning participation on postsecondary success, she concludes, “Dual enrollment programs should be more widely available to all students and preparation for taking part in these classes should begin for the majority of students in the middle school years.” Overall, these studies and others like them indicate:

1. Students who participate in accelerated learning programs are more likely to graduate from high school.
2. Accelerated learning exposes students to a college experience, making students more likely to continue into a college program.
3. First generation students and other underrepresented populations have the opportunity to “try college on” and discover that they can succeed.
4. Colleges and universities are more likely to accept students who have participated in accelerated learning programs, knowing they tend to be more successful.
5. Earning credits early provides momentum for the student to enter college with enough credits that they will be more likely to complete their first year and continue.

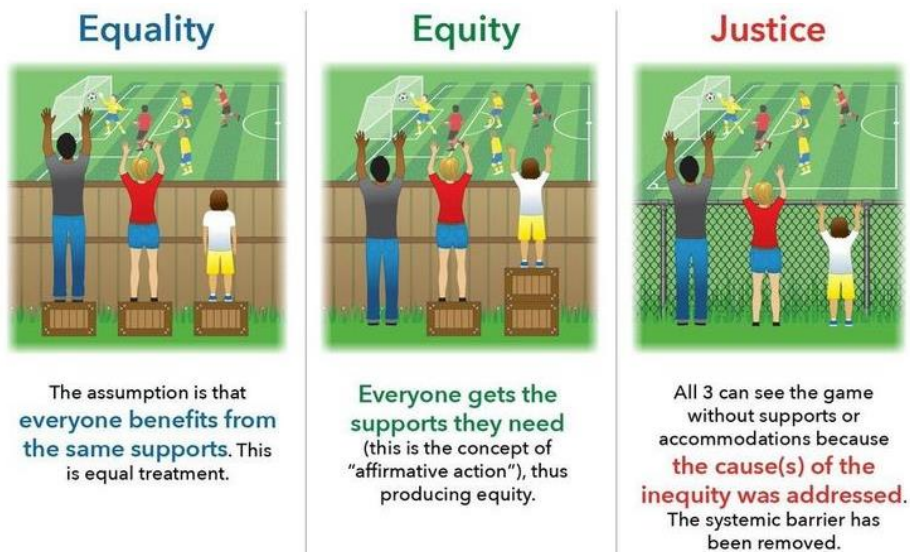
6. Accelerated learning saves students and families a great deal of money, making college accessible to a much larger part of the population.
7. A college-going mindset should be actively developed during middle school, if not earlier.



## Oregon's Equity Lens

The Oregon Department of Education's goal in funding Regional Promise Grants is to encourage participation of diverse secondary students, who do not participate at the same rates as their peers, for the purpose of improving postsecondary outcomes. Recipients are expected to address the inequities of access, opportunity, interest, and attainment.

This audit was requested to ensure that Clackamas Community College's High School Connections program documentation and policies do not inadvertently exclude historically underrepresented high school students. It is important that students are able to picture themselves as successful college students, both fitting in and contributing to the overall culture. In research conducted by Hurtado and Alvarado (2013), undergraduate students experienced higher levels of academic validation the more courses they had that included readings about privilege, race/ethnicity, and gender, and when course pedagogy provided greater opportunities for intensive dialogue and service learning. The authors argue that this academic validation leads to students who are empowered learners.



Oregon's Chief Education Office produces an Oregon Educator Equity Report each year. In the most recent edition, they compare being treated equally, equitably, and having systemic barriers removed through an image similar to the one above. This visualization separates the concept of "equity" from that of "sameness equating to fairness." Gutierrez and Jaramillo (2006) argue that defining equity as achieving fairness fails to address the structures that created and sustain inequities in the first place; and that educational reform must be based in learning practices that are simultaneously race conscious and equity oriented. Galloway, Ishimaru, Larson & Carr (2011) posit that leader behaviors and practices upholding the status quo are proactively destructive.



## 2. Website Review

Jaime Clarke, Director of the Office of Education Partnerships at Clackamas, provided numerous documents related to the High School Connections programs for review (see Appendix A). Because the program does not exist in isolation, other administrative documents were included in the review (see Appendix B). Documents were reviewed for concerns commonly raised in literature related to inclusive practices including:

- Stereotypes
- Lack of mention or invisibility
- Over representation of diverse students in images when compared to actual student/faculty population
- Age/experience-appropriate registration instructions and policy explanations
- Statements welcoming of diverse participation
- Poverty, gender, and other inequities
- Images of leadership as inclusive of diversity
- Mission and vision statements that emphasize a valuing of diversity
- Overall campus diversity statement



## Findings & Recommendations

In the following sections, findings are highlighted in the box, and the recommendations follow in the narrative.

1. **Encouraging diverse populations to enroll:** Internet materials must be developed specifically for a high school student and parent audience.

Registration and other policies and procedures in the college environment can be confusing for students who are new to the college experience or who are not sure

it is a good fit for them. It is important to have supporting videos, and procedures for in-person assistance available, and these options are in place. However, if the first exposure to the process is in print, it is extremely important that the information is easy to locate, clear and concise, and that there are clear steps for working through the system. While the necessary materials are present, it would be easy for the new user to become lost in the “bread crumbs.” A map of the programs, documents, and policies applying to each would be beneficial to anyone wanting information about the programs. If print (or web-based) materials are confusing, younger students, students whose first language is not English (or their parents), and students who do not have role models of others who have navigated the system successfully will conclude, “This is not for me.” and may lose the opportunity to gain the benefit of early college attendance.

In line with the previous point, although one goal of the program is to introduce high school students to the policies and procedures they will face in a college environment, any materials that first-time registrants will be viewing should be written in a way that will keep them engaged in the process. The use of visuals and flow charts may help draw students in, and address the needs of students who are more visual thinkers or who may find the processes and vocabulary foreign. Once students have experienced the process, they can learn the vocabulary and structures around it that are all a part of the college experience.

Teachers, family, and friends are important influencers of students’ attitudes about their capabilities. In some cultures, family plays a greater role in decision making about the paths students choose. As early as middle school, families should be coached in helping their students to see themselves attaining post-secondary degrees, especially for those who are first generation college students. If Clackamas has not already developed ways to impact students in area middle schools, this should be addressed.

Materials focusing on families’ questions about the benefits of participating in accelerated learning programs can be one more avenue to encourage students in this direction. There is currently some information in the Regional Promise section that targets parents, but it provides very little concrete information, and the links provided take the reader to generic pages, not directly to the specific information sought. Information such as that shared in the Accelerated Learning Benefits section may help families and students understand how beneficial any amount of accelerated learning credits can be for their student.

It is important to students that they see role models who have characteristics similar to their own, including teachers and faculty. Clackamas should continue to remind high schools in their employee recruitment efforts that they should be seeking teachers qualified to teach dual credit courses and representing diverse

backgrounds. Clackamas must likewise address issues in recruiting faculty of color and members of other underrepresented groups.

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- 2. Navigating to the HSC website:** The program should be more readily searchable using terms common to high school students and parents.
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While having a variety of options available to students is a very positive aspect of the HSC program, it also introduces confusion to those who are exploring those options. Looking at this from the perspective of someone who is not familiar with the programs, “High School” and “High School Students” was typed in the Clackamas search engine. Several of the HSC programs appeared near the top, but it was not clear which was the umbrella site.

When Directory is clicked on, High School Connections is not listed. The searcher would need to know the name of the unit (Office of Education Partnerships) to find the list of programs and contact information there.

HSC is not listed under Academics/Departments + Programs or Academics/Courses + Registration. It is not until one moves down to Academics/Academic Offerings that High School Connections is listed. To those outside of higher education, it might be logical to assume that HSC would be listed under Departments + Programs. The other top three menu items do not address HSC issues directly (although some of these policies or services may be available to HSC students). Those who may not feel confident about attending college may use the challenge of locating the information as further proof that they do not belong there.

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- 3. Accessing the different HSC programs:** Answer the burning questions parents and students have up front, through a FAQ or overview type of document, clearly addressing them and posted to the *High School Connections Documents* section of the HSC website ([clackamas.edu/academics/academic-offerings/high-school-connections](http://clackamas.edu/academics/academic-offerings/high-school-connections)).
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Parents and students will want to know who can enroll, i.e., what grade level one needs to be in to be able to enroll, if there are entrance requirements such as the SAT or ACT or a minimum GPA, fees, tuition, the cost of books, if scholarships are available, where the classes are held, if there is transportation, if a recommendation

from the high school is required, what happens if the student does not do well and how to contest situations where a student is not recommended (if this is required by the school). There might also be questions about childcare, either specifically for the student or for siblings the student might be responsible for after school. A chart of the different programs and which characteristics apply to each would be helpful in this FAQ or overview document.

Bias in eligibility can creep in when standardized testing is used or when students must be referred by teachers or counselors who may not recognize their own biases. Because of test bias issues, some schools are looking at alternative ways to evaluate students for entrance beyond standardized testing (see Strauss, 2015). Clackamas is to be commended on its use of the PASS program, a multiple measures assessment, and Accuplacer (an on-line placement test with practice tests) for placement decisions, and for not requiring nationally standardized testing for entrance. Because HSC is aware that their student body is largely white and female, they may want to explore if bias in which students are encouraged to take accelerated learning courses is a factor. Comparing referral rates of diverse students with the population in their high schools can help identify if these issues are creeping in.

There are a wide variety of CTE offerings, which will vary from high school to high school and district to district. CTE courses have been shown to be extremely beneficial to students. Taking CTE courses has a strong, positive correlation with completing high school and continuing into higher education. **A clearer description of where to locate CTE courses should be provided on the HSC website, along with an explanation of the benefits gained.** Currently, there is a section labeled “High School CTE,” but this is not a complete list of the CTE opportunities students face. In order to find out what CTE courses are offered at their schools, students must click on ACC, ACC Course List, and then their high school name. They will then be given a list of courses, but the CTE courses are not identified as such. Because there is a separate section labeled High School CTE, students clicking there may not realize that there are CTE courses listed in other places, or that they could be found under ACC.

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**4. Forms and application procedures:** Review forms to ensure that inadvertent bias has not been introduced.

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Application forms only present gender options of male and female, leaving out students who do not identify in either of these ways.

Although carefully worded, statements about not having a social security number for registration singles out DACA students by implication (i.e., “The online application

requires a Social Security Number (SSN). If you do not have a SSN, contact the ACC office to request a paper application.”). In addition, high school students may not have or know their SSN, and their parents may not want them providing it. While it is understandable that Clackamas would want as few paper applications as possible, it might be worth piloting wording such as “When applying on-line, students must enter a social security number. If you do not have or would prefer not to enter this on-line, contact the ACC office to request a paper application.” to track if the number of requests for paper applications is greatly increased.

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**5. Administrative level concerns:** Work to ensure equity and inclusion are institutionalized at Clackamas.

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It is important that diversity be made a priority at the highest levels in the institution, and that there are indicators in place to evaluate the institution’s progress towards meeting its goals. Public statements should indicate that diversity is integral to the institution’s mission. In a search of the Clackamas website, no reference to a Campus-wide diversity statement could be found. Nor is the concept included in Clackamas’s purpose, its mission, or its core themes. An example of such a statement comes from a message from the President on the home page of the University of Oregon’s website: “... we will continue, with renewed vigor and commitment, our efforts to make this university more respectful, more inclusive, and more welcoming to people of all races and ethnicities; all nationalities and religions; all sexual orientations and gender identities; and all abilities.”

In general, the information available on the website is silent on diversity issues. Using the terms diversity, cultural diversity, inclusion, gay and lesbian, equity, and social justice to search the Clackamas website resulted in references to student clubs, courses, and job announcements. Lacking were announcements about faculty awards or recognitions in any of these areas, articles about diverse student achievement, or any indication that promoting diversity is a campus-wide priority.

The Board is made up of representatives from the seven different regions Clackamas serves. Although one board member has a background in equity and inclusion, the website does not indicate that board members are sought out who represent the student body it seeks to attract. If this were the case, it should be mentioned on the Board website.

The New England Resource Center for Higher Education Resources (NERCHE) states: “A primary feature of institutionalized diversity effort is the development of a shared definition for diversity and inclusive excellence that provides meaning, focus,

and emphasis for campus renewal and transformation.” It is concerning that this type of effort or statement is not easily identifiable in the College’s public materials. Resources for self-study regarding inclusion practices include the Inclusive Excellence Toolkit (Trevino, Walker, and Leyba, 2009), and the Self Assessment Rubric for the Institutionalization of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Higher Education (NERCHE, no date).



## Website Review Summary

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Clackamas Community College’s High School Connections programs have in place many policies and procedures to assist high school students and faculty members through the requirements inherent to accelerated learning programs. There are, however, many points where bias and exclusionary practices, however inadvertent, can creep in to an otherwise sound system. The Clackamas Community College High School Connections Program is proving its commitment to quality experiences for all students by beginning this process with curiosity and examining what changes might be called for. Overall, the issues identified here were related to the lack of content related to diversity and challenges navigating the website. While targeting historically underserved students, the suggestions made would be beneficial to most users, but especially those who are new to the college experience.

## 3. Focus Group Report

The purpose of the focus groups was to engage high school personnel to both identify any practices or processes in Clackamas Community College's High School Connections Program (HSC) that prevent, discourage, or deter diverse students from participating in accelerated learning opportunities provided by HSC and to glean suggestions on how better to encourage participation by diverse and underserved audiences. Diverse background includes but is not limited to: race; ethnicity; gender; disability; religious beliefs; sexual orientation or identity; first generation students; and poverty, migrant, or homeless status.

There are a number of general challenges diverse students face. The lack of role models and the presence of peer influence are very real to secondary students. Students from diverse backgrounds or experiencing challenging circumstances may not picture themselves in college settings; their families may not either. Unfortunately, left unchecked, teachers and other school personnel may also have low expectations or otherwise lack the conviction that these students should be participating in accelerated learning courses (McKown & Weinstein, 2008). First generation families often cannot help with the process as they lack these experiences themselves. Homelessness, poverty, and high mobility create unstable environments, which may add responsibilities to students to assist with family crises. Some students may not be able to afford transportation to attend off-campus programming. For students on IEPs or 504 plans, there often is confusion around how access to accommodations is obtained.

In addition to the challenges that students face which may affect their decision to participate, there are also culture clashes, or clashes of purpose, between secondary and postsecondary programs. These differences have been explored in the literature focusing on the college transition experiences of secondary students with disabilities, especially regarding the differences between the Americans with Disabilities Act and IDEA.

At the secondary level, teachers usually have degrees in teaching and a subject area as well. They are student focused, seek the involvement of families, and are very involved with student planning. They have typically been taught how to differentiate instruction so that more students with learning differences can be included in regular classroom settings. Postsecondary faculty differ in that they typically do not have degrees in teaching, only in their content areas. It is up to them to determine the best way to deliver their course content. Postsecondary students are expected to function independent of their families. The area of service provision



to students with disabilities is handled entirely differently in the two settings. In secondary settings, the school has the responsibility to identify and provide services to students with disabilities. In postsecondary settings, students are expected to self-identify to the appropriate entity on campus, request the necessary accommodation, and provide documentation to support those requests. There is also confusion on the part of some secondary staff on how accommodations are determined in postsecondary settings, and misinformation to students may result. High school students participating in accelerated learning options may feel they are in an “in-between” state, developmentally teenagers with adult expectations on them.

In addition, there are policy issues that create challenges and conflict between the two settings. Oregon’s Teacher Standards and Practices Committee does not require most teachers to have a Masters degree. On the other hand, colleges usually do not hire faculty with less than Masters degree, and the Masters must be in the content area, not education. This creates a challenge for schools that want to provide the most opportunities for their students. School personnel believe their teachers have a better handle on how to teach students with learning differences and how to be inclusive in their teaching. They want to see their high school students have a successful experience in accelerated learning opportunities, and believe they are best prepared to accomplish that. Unfortunately, they are limited in who can teach the accelerated learning courses, to the extent that they are unable to offer entry-level to advanced courses even though they believe their teachers are more than competent (and possibly better prepared in some ways) to do so.



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The Clackamas Director of the Office of Education Partnerships extended invitations to site leaders to set up nine focus groups to be held between April 16 and April 27, 2018. The focus groups ranged in size from five to nine participants, and were one hour in length.

Sessions were held at Clackamas Community College (2), West Linn Wilsonville, Oregon City, Canby, Molalla, Estacada, North Clackamas, and Gladstone. Participants included high school counselors, retention specialists, transition staff, principals, school district superintendents, teachers of sponsored credit and dual credit courses, alternative education teachers, and English language learner, homeless, and migrant liaisons. Some participants also had children who had participated in High School Connections programs.



General areas of inquiry for the Clackamas HSC and Student Services staff included:

- What does equity mean to you?
- How does High School Connections fit into the vision of Clackamas?
- How does Clackamas ensure they recruit diverse students?
- What do you believe are barriers at Clackamas to increasing diversity?

General areas of inquiry for schools focused on their efforts to encourage participation of diverse students and those experiencing challenging circumstances. They included:

- In what other accelerated learning programs does your school participate?
- How does your school encourage students to participate in accelerated college credit, like Advanced College Credit, at Clackamas Community College?
- How do you ensure diverse students and their families get information about accelerated college credit?
- What barriers do your students face that prevent them from participating?
- What feedback do teachers hear from students who participate? Feedback from those who do not?
- How HSC can assist the school in recruiting/engaging diverse students?

The entire slate of questions can be found in Appendices C and D. In all but one focus group, the lead evaluator and an additional project staff took notes. In the final focus group, the only Center staff attending was the facilitator, who took notes for herself. Upon completion of the focus groups, a thorough analysis of the notes was conducted. The analysis identified common themes, and then grouped the themes to larger concepts. Recommendations were then developed based on specific findings from the focus groups and from best practices in equity and inclusion literature.

As with any study of this nature, it should be noted that participants are not in a position to know all of the activities and efforts that High School Connections conducts, and that High School Connections will likely need to discuss further the recommendations with their Clackamas Promise Advisory Board and the high school counselors to prioritize their response. In cases where they are already doing what was suggested, efforts to determine why schools are not aware of these activities should be made.



# Findings & Recommendations

In the following sections, findings are highlighted in the box, and the recommendations follow in the narrative. Sidebars provide examples of comments supporting the findings and recommendations.

- 1. Relationships with Partners:** All participants enjoyed working with HSC staff and appreciated the work that is done to support students in getting an early start to college.

“We appreciate that they are walking the walk with us to improve equity.”

“Overall, the [Office of Education Partnerships] does a great job of being in the community and continuing to grow the program.”

“Clackamas will bend over backwards to work with us. They go above and beyond in customer service.”

1. The High School Connections program has strong partnerships with the programs it serves.

2. Recognizing that not all programs have the same level of expectation for students to complete accelerated learning credits, provide information to programs to share with underserved students.

3. As well, provide ideas about how to encourage diverse students to participate.

4. One goal of accelerated learning programs is to help students understand the different expectations they will face in postsecondary programs. Participants felt that students who do not see themselves in college for whatever reason (e.g., grades, lack of role models, poverty) are further deterred by complex procedures and expectations that they be independent. Get input from partner schools as

to specific issues that arise during registration and the struggles it presents to students to improve their experiences in the process.

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**2. Student Engagement:** Participants indicated they do not get information back from HSC that would allow them to know if diverse students from their schools were participating at equal rates to non-diverse students. Schools varied greatly in the efforts they make to encourage students to participate in accelerated learning opportunities.

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1. When doing presentations to students or visiting schools to facilitate registration, HSC staff should find creative ways to partner with diverse student organizations or graduates of the high school for recruiting. Students are more responsive to someone who has “walked in their shoes”.
2. Provide a liaison or access to “buddies” with similar backgrounds to assist on-campus students.
3. Ensure someone who is bilingual is at informational meetings, who performs the role of cultural broker.
4. Make sure informational meetings involve conversation, not a “dump truck” PowerPoint approach. Multiple information sessions likely will be required, especially when working with interpreters.
5. Remind schools to encourage any staff who work with secondary students to bring up accelerated learning opportunities with students and their families. These include homeless liaisons, AVID teachers, and transition specialists.
6. Collaborate with existing groups, invite select members to participate in advisory board or other reviews of CCC’s progress in meeting its equity goals, and participate with schools where possible in helping students participate in events targeting diverse populations. These might include disability advocates, *Mente Latino*, *Women in Trades*, *Todos Juntos*, or food pantries.
7. Meet with school counselors and teachers regularly to find out what events they have and what their needs are.
8. Provide materials about career paths.

“When will their staff look like our student population?”

“It was so effective when Ivan came to campus. Latino students flocked to him and registered. They heard his story and believed it [getting a degree] was possible.”

“Teachers refer... but there is implicit bias.”

“Families using interpreters may believe that asking questions would be disrespectful to their interpreters.”

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- 3. Disability Access:** Students with disabilities may be an underserved group as some programs indicated they do not refer students with disabilities to these courses and others indicated they do not provide accommodations for students with disabilities in any accelerated learning courses. High schools need clarification in this area.
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“None of our students on IEPs have passed a [specific program] course at Clackamas.”

“There’s no mention of students with disabilities or how to request accommodations on their site.”

“We don’t refer our students with disabilities for dual credit. Why would we? They can’t alter their programs.”

1. Clarify registration process and provision of accommodations for students with disabilities.
2. Create materials that specifically address disability access policies.
3. Work with transition specialists and/or Vocational Rehabilitation to encourage students to apply for courses and practice self-advocacy skills.
4. Provide workshops or summer camps for students with disabilities.
5. Students with disabilities still face the challenge of low expectations. Help them see themselves in college. Recruit current students with disabilities to help with recruitment.
6. Get accommodation information out to schools to help dispel myths.

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- 4. Website:** Uniformly, participants found the website difficult to navigate and rely on their own course catalogs for advising.
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1. Make the website more inviting. The tone of the website comes across as punitive because it focuses on rules and directions.
2. Include an explanation of the “Big Picture” of accelerated learning options. Parents need this information, too.

3. Match the reading level to the intended audience (i.e., high school students and their parents).
4. Draw a clear path between accelerated learning taken in the high school, postsecondary education, and career planning.
5. Provide a chart for each high school showing all classes available, the cost, if a fee waiver is available for that course, if it is part of a CTE program of study, where it is taught, and if it is taught by college faculty or high school teacher.

“Students should not feel intimidated when they look at the website.”

“Honestly, I don’t use the website for finding courses. We print everything in our course schedule”

- 
5. **Registration & Information Sharing:** Secondary schools have reporting responsibilities to ODE regarding the participation of their students in higher education and other post-school vocational training. Participants uniformly indicated they cannot get access to this information.
- 

“There is a flyer that says a fee waiver is available, but it doesn’t say anything about how to get it.”

“How can we create intentionality around what we are offering? We can’t start this process because we have no idea who is getting credit for what classes.”

1. Provide information about how taking classes now might affect FAFSA and future financial aid written in a language high school students will be able to understand.
2. Provide clear information about how to access the fee waiver and to which courses it applies.
3. Provide the paper version of registration online in a downloadable, printable format.
4. Continue to get into schools as much as possible. Uniformly, high schools appreciated having Clackamas staff guide students through registration.
5. Provide student registration, demographics, and grade information to schools
6. FERPA allows information to be shared between educational institutions. Sharing it would make you a leader in the field.

7. State reporting requirements: initiatives require schools to report how students are being introduced to post-high school options, and the demographics of who is accessing college in high school.
8. Counselors cite that they cannot adequately help students with planning if they do not have a clear picture of the college credit they are earning.



## Limitations

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This is a report of the findings from nine focus groups. While the information reported here are those findings that were consistent across groups, there are areas this report does not address. First, students, diverse or not, were not involved in this phase of the project. A survey is being used to collect information from students. Nonetheless, students would be an excellent source of information to get insights about how they get information, what speaks to them the loudest, and how they decide whether or not to participate in accelerated learning options.

In addition, there was little visible diversity among the participants. Demographic information was not collected, but very few participants represented different racial groups. Other aspects of diversity would not be known unless it was shared by the participant, which it was not. This lack of diversity is common among Oregon school employees at all levels. Leads at participant high schools were asked to recruit focus group participants who were the most involved in their accelerated learning options to help evaluate procedures and informational materials for their inclusivity. In hindsight, in addition to these participants, other diverse school employees might also have been included for their insights, as they may have different relationships with diverse students.

Finally, the information gleaned from the focus groups is a reflection of the members participating. Groups were often not clear on the purpose or how they had been selected. In a few instances, additional participants were recruited at the last minute when the purpose was understood, and a few exited when it was determined that they did not have information related to the purpose. Nonetheless, the information gleaned from participants was mostly consistent across programs. Considering the diversity of the school programs involved, this supports the credibility of the results.

## 4. Stakeholder Response

Upon completion of the focus group series and analysis of the data, presentations were prepared to report out the results and to confirm the findings with four specific audiences: Clackamas Community College administration, High School Connections staff, Student Services staff, and focus group participants. Feedback from these sessions has been incorporated into this report. There were 9-11 individuals present at each session.

Two of the three groups completed evaluations. The session with Clackamas administration was the shortest of the three (one hour) and time did not allow for the paper and pencil feedback form to be completed.

There were eight items on the form, with space for comments. A total of 15 evaluations were completed. Overall ratings were 3.05 as measured on a 4-point scale. Twelve out of fifteen participants agreed that the session increased their understanding of the barriers diverse student populations face in accessing accelerated learning options; that they understand the connection between the content and engaging diverse students; that as a result of the session they will be better prepared to engage diverse students; and that the presenter was well prepared. Fourteen of the fifteen agreed that the information was relevant to their current work role. All those completing the evaluation agreed that the session was interactive and engaging to the participants and that the presenter was responsive and open to questions. Because several participants in the second presentation were well versed in diversity issues, the ratings of how much the presentation affected their understanding of the issues was understandably lower than other attendees.

Besides confirmatory and clarifying information surfacing, participants had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the information presented with each other. At times, one participant might disagree with a finding, only to have others point out that it was accurate and provide examples from their own work. In this way, participants were able to integrate the information shared. At each session there were participants who stated there was information presented that opened their eyes to how the website or procedures might inadvertently present an obstacle to some students based on their circumstances.

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## **APPENDIX A: High School Connections Documents Reviewed**

### **High School Connections**

- High School Connections Winter 2018 Newsletter
- High School Connections Spring 2017 Newsletter
- High School Connections Winter 2017 Newsletter
- High School Connections Fall 2017 Newsletter
- High School Connections Fall 2016 Newsletter
- High School to College Connections Cadre [Flier for 2017-18 Quarterly High School Counselor Meetings]
- High School to College Connections Cadre Agenda Winter 2018
- High School to College Connections Cadre Agenda Spring 2017
- High School to College Connections Cadre Agenda Winter 2017
- High School to College Connections Cadre Agenda Fall 2016
- High School Connections Past Due Student Policy
- High School Connections 2016-2017 End of Year Report
- Ready to Start College Now? [High School Connections 2017 Brochure]

### **High School Plus (HSP)**

- 2017-18 World of Speed High School Plus Registration Information
- High School Plus Cost List 2017-2018
- High School Plus CNC Machining Technician Career Pathway Certificate
- High School Plus Sample Course List
- High School Plus Basic Engine Technician Certificate
- Clackamas Middle College High School Plus Student/Parent/Guardian Information Fall 2017

### **High School Career and Technical Education (CTE)**

- High School Career Technical Education Course Offerings 2017-18
- High School Career Technical Education Entry Level Welding Technician Career Pathway Certificate
- High School Career Technical Education CNC Machining Technician Career Pathway Certificate
- High School Career Technical Education Basic Engine Technician Certificate
- High School Connections Registration Form

### **Expanded Options/Early College Program (EOP)**

- North Clackamas School District Early College Student Checklist

- Expanded Options/Early College Participation Form
- Expanded Options Student Checklist
- Expanded Options Student Attendance and Grade Checks
- 2017-2018 Important Dates at CCC for Expanded Options Students

### **Advanced College Credit**

- MyClackamas Password Reset Instructions
- Oregon City High School Student Guide 2017-2018 Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer Degree (AAOT)
- High School Connections Application
- High School Connections Registration
- High School Connections 18 + Credit Form
- Advanced College Credit Student Handbook 2017/2018
- 2017-18 Advanced College Credit Registration Information

## APPENDIX B: Clackamas Community College Documents Reviewed

- CCC Board of Education: <https://www.clackamas.edu/about-us/leadership/clackamas-community-college-board-of-education>
- Leadership: <https://www.clackamas.edu/about-us/leadership>
- CCC Purpose, Mission, Core Themes and Code of Ethics: <https://www.clackamas.edu/about-us/vision-initiatives/ccc-purpose-mission-core-themes-and-code-of-ethics>
- CCC webpage search engine

## APPENDIX C: Clackamas Community College Focus Group Questions

1. Talk with us about the vision of CCC and how HSC fits within that vision.
2. How do you see the CCC vision as being welcoming to diverse populations.
3. Can you give specific examples of how the program has reached out to diverse populations?
4. How well does the HSC vision align with the CCC vision?
5. Share with us your approach for reaching out to students in diverse populations.
6. Share with us how you get feedback from students?
7. As members of diverse populations?
8. What does CCC do to prepare students to work in a diverse workforce?
9. What is CCC doing to recruit diverse faculty?
10. What is HSC doing to recruit a more diverse student body.
11. What else do you think may need to occur?
12. What do you think needs to change to attract more diverse students into the HSC?
13. Is there anything else you want us to know or you want to share?
14. If we have time:
15. What does culturally responsive (diverse populations) mean to you? What does this look like on your website or in your promotional materials.
16. Is there outreach to different groups? What does that look like?

## APPENDIX D: High School Partner Focus Group Questions

1. What other dual credit programs do you participate in?
2. Do you believe the diversity of students who take dual credit is equivalent to the diversity of your student population?
3. What do you offer through CCC?
4. What is the process for getting information to students and getting them registered for classes?
5. What are the groups you target?
6. What parts of the system work well as inclusive practices?
7. How could the process be improved?
8. How is the information communicated to parents and families?
9. Why do some students not take advantage of it? Why don't diverse students?
10. What do you do to ensure all students have access?
11. How do you advertise the courses you have available?

## APPENDIX F: Presentation Evaluation Form

- 1) What is your current role: \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) This session increased my understanding of current barriers diverse student populations in high school face in accessing dual enrollment opportunities.
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 3) This session was relevant to my needs in my current position.
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 4) As a result of this session, I understand the connection between the content presented and engaging diverse students.
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 5) As a result of this session, I will be better prepared to engage diverse students.
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 6) The session was interactive and engaging to participants.
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 7) The presenter(s) were well prepared.
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
- 8) The presenter(s) were responsive and open to questions.
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree

Please add any additional comments on the back.

**APPENDIX E: Equity Audit Results Presentation**





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## Equity Audit Focus Group Summary



### Agenda

- Purpose
- Description of Process
- Key Findings
- Recommendations for Overcoming Barriers:
  - Student Engagement
  - Disability
  - Website
  - Registration
  - Reporting



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## Purpose:

To engage high school personnel in identifying any practices or processes in Clackamas Community College's High School Connections Program (HSC) that prevent, discourage, or deter diverse students from participating in accelerated learning opportunities provided by HSC.

*Diverse background* includes but is not limited to: race; ethnicity; gender; disability; religious beliefs; sexual orientation or identity; first generation students; and poverty, migrant, or homeless status.



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## General Challenges to Diverse Students

- 1<sup>st</sup> Gen families often can't help with process
- Students not able to picture themselves in college settings
- Homelessness, poverty, and high mobility creates unstable environments
- Peers not participating
- Transportation costs for programming at CCC
- Responsibilities at home /family in crisis
- Confusion around access options
- Lack of college-going role models



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## Learning in Two Worlds

### Typical Secondary

- Teachers have degrees in teaching
- Teachers are student focused
- Teachers are involved with families
- Teachers are very involved with student planning
- Teachers are accustomed to working with students with disabilities or students with learning differences
- Can't get info on students to assist them holistically in schedule planning
- "IHEs don't understand our perspective."

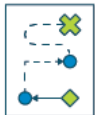
### Typical Postsecondary

- Faculty are content professionals who may not have training in pedagogy
- Faculty are content focused
- Faculty rarely see families
- Students are expected to be independent
- Faculty are typically not keen on changing their preferred teaching style
- Believes High School thinks "more is better"
- "HSs don't understand our perspective."



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## Process

- Nine focus groups were conducted from April 16 to 27
- Focus groups ranged in size from five to nine
- Focus groups were one hour in length and were arranged by the Clackamas Director of Education Partnerships
- Sessions were held at:
  - Clackamas Community College (2)
  - West Linn Wilsonville
  - Oregon City
  - Canby
  - Molalla
  - Estacada
  - North Clackamas
  - Gladstone



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## Participants included:

- HS counselors
- Retention specialists
- Transition staff
- Principals
- School district superintendents
- Teachers of sponsored credit courses
- ELL, homeless, and migrant liaisons
- Alternative education teachers
- Some also had children who had participated in High School Connections programs



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## General Areas of Inquiry: Clackamas

- What does *equity* mean to you?
- How does High School Connections (HSC) fit into the vision of Clackamas?
- How does Clackamas ensure they recruit diverse students?
- What do you believe are barriers at Clackamas to increasing diversity?



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## General Areas of Inquiry: Schools

- In what other accelerated learning programs does your school participate?
- How does your school encourage students to participate in accelerated college credit, like Advanced College Credit, at CCC?
- How do you ensure diverse students and their families get information about accelerated college credit?
- What barriers do your students face that prevent them from participating?
- What feedback do teachers hear from students who participate?  
Feedback from those who do not?
- How HSC can assist the school in recruiting/enrolling diverse students?



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## Findings and Recommendations were Determined by...

- Thorough review of notes from focus groups
- Identifying common themes
- Attaching themes to larger concepts
- Recommendations were developed based on specific feedback from focus groups and from best practices in equity and inclusion literature
- Reminders:
  - HSC may already be doing what participants are suggesting
  - HSC may not be able to take on all the suggestions
  - A meeting between HSC and high school counselors and teachers may help prioritize if HSC chooses to implement any of these suggestions



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## Findings

- Overall
  - All participants enjoyed working with HSC staff and appreciated the work that is done to support students in getting an early start to college.
- Transition Expectations
  - One goal of accelerated learning programs is to help students understand the different expectations they will face in postsecondary programs. Participants felt that students who do not see themselves in college for whatever reason (e.g., grades, lack of role models, poverty) are further deterred by complex procedures and expectations that they be independent.
- Engagement of Diverse Students
  - Participants indicated they do not get information back from HSC that would allow them to know if diverse students from their schools were participating at equal rates to non-diverse students.
  - Schools varied greatly in the efforts they make to encourage students to participate in accelerated learning opportunities.



## Findings

- Disability
  - Students with disabilities may be an underserved group as some programs indicated they do not refer students with disabilities to these courses and others indicated they do not provide accommodations for students with disabilities in any accelerated learning courses. High schools need clarification in this area.
- Website
  - Uniformly, participants found the website difficult to navigate and rely on their own course catalogs for advising.
- Reporting
  - Secondary schools have reporting responsibilities to ODE regarding the participation of their students in higher education and other post-school vocational training. Participants uniformly indicated they cannot get access to this information.





## Kudos!

*"Clackamas will bend over backwards to work with us. They go above and beyond in customer service."*

*"We appreciate that they are walking the walk with us to improve equity."*

*"The Clackamas librarian is coming to talk to students about access to the library. What a great opportunity for them to experience the college atmosphere!"*

*"Overall, the Office of Education Partnerships does a great job of being in the community and continuing to grow the program."*

*"They would do anything we ask them to do."*

*"Our students look forward to the Skills Competition each year. It is great to see the pride they take in their work."*



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Recommendations:

## Overcoming Student Engagement Barriers

*"It was so effective when Ivan came to campus. Latino students flocked to him and registered. They heard his story and believed it was possible."*

*"When will their staff look like our student population?"*

- When doing presentations to students or visiting schools to facilitate registration, HSC staff should find creative ways to partner with diverse student organizations or graduates of the high school for recruiting. Students are more responsive to someone who has "walked in their shoes".
- Provide a liaison or access to "buddies" with similar backgrounds to assist on-campus students.



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Recommendations:

## Overcoming Student Engagement Barriers

*"Families must feel safe in these conversations. Maybe they aren't citizens, or didn't file taxes."*

*"Families using interpreters may believe that asking questions would be disrespectful to their interpreters."*

- Ensure someone who is bilingual is at informational meetings who performs the role of cultural broker.
- Make sure informational meetings involve conversation, not a "dump truck" PowerPoint approach.
- Multiple information sessions likely will be required.



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Recommendations:

## Overcoming Student Engagement Barriers

*"Teachers refer... but there is implicit bias."*

- Meet with school counselors and teachers regularly to find out what events they have and what their needs are.
- Provide materials about career paths.
- Participate with schools where possible in helping students participate in events targeting diverse populations, for example:
  - Women in Trades
  - Todos Juntos
  - AVID
  - Food Pantries
  - Homeless liaisons
  - Disability advocates
  - Mente Latino Male Summit



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Recommendations:

## Overcoming Disability Barriers

*"None of our students on IEPs have passed a [specific program] course at Clackamas."*

*"There's no mention of students with disabilities or how to request accommodations on their site."*

- Clarify registration process and provision of accommodations for students with disabilities.
- Create materials that specifically address disability access policies.
- Work with transition specialists and/or Vocational Rehabilitation to encourage students to apply for courses and practice self advocacy skills.



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Recommendations:

## Overcoming Disability Barriers

*"We don't refer our students with disabilities for dual credit. Why would we? They can't alter their programs."*

- Provide workshops or summer camps for students with disabilities.
- Students with disabilities still face the challenge of low expectations. Help them see themselves in college. Recruit current students with disabilities to help with recruitment.
- Get accommodation information out to schools to help dispel myths.



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Recommendations:

## Overcoming Website Barriers

*"Students should not feel intimidated when they look at the website."*

- Engage students in their interests.
- Make the website more inviting. The tone of the website comes across as punitive because it focuses on rules and directions.
- Include an explanation of the "Big Picture" of accelerated learning options. Parents need this information, too.
- Match the reading level to the intended audience (i.e., high school students and their parents).



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Recommendations:

## Overcoming Website Barriers

*"Honestly, I don't use the website for finding courses. We print everything in our course schedule"*

- Draw a clear path between accelerated learning taken in the high school, postsecondary education, and career planning.
- Provide a chart for each high school showing all classes available, the cost, if a fee waiver is available for that course, if it is part of a CTE program of study, where it is taught, and if it is taught by college faculty or high school teacher.



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Recommendations:

## Overcoming Registration Barriers

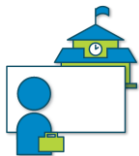
*“There is a flyer that says a fee waiver is available, but it doesn’t say anything about how to get it.”*

- Provide information about how taking classes now might impact FAFSA and future financial aid written in a language high school students will be able to understand.
- Provide clear information about how to access the fee waiver and which courses it applies to.
- Provide the paper version of registration on-line in a downloadable, printable format.
- Continue to get into schools as much as possible. Uniformly, high schools appreciated having Clackamas staff guide students through registration.



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Recommendations:

## Overcoming Reporting Barriers

*“How can we create intentionality around what we are offering? We can’t start this process because we have no idea who is getting credit for what classes.”*

- Provide student registration, demographics, and grade information to schools
  - FERPA allows information to be shared between educational institutions. Sharing it would make you a leader in the field.
- State reporting requirements: initiatives require schools to report how students are being introduced to post-high school options, and the demographics of who is accessing college in high school.
- Counselors complain that they can’t adequately help students with planning if they don’t have a clear picture of the college credit they are earning.



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