

December 14, 2017

Higher Education Coordinating Commission Members:

My name is Andy Gardner. I'm the Superintendent of the North Santiam School District. The District partners with Western Oregon University through the Willamette Promise as well as Chemeketa Community College through its Dual Credit Program. I also serve on the Willamette Promise Advisory Board.

I am here today in support of a letter which was sent to the Commission in November of 2017. That letter requested that the HECC suspend the required ABL transcript notation for two years in order to develop more longitudinal data about the success and persistence of Willamette Promise students as they attended Oregon Colleges. . This requirement for a notation was created when the Higher Education Coordinating Commission adopted the recommendations from the Accelerated Learning Work Group in 2016. Since that time, students have had their courses from the Willamette Promise noted on Western Oregon transcripts as ABL credit; this has in turn raised awareness in colleges, and decreased their full transferability.

We come to the HECC today not to engage in conflict, but to raise awareness of the broader purpose of the Willamette Promise and Dual Credit in a comprehensive educational system. The level of education of Oregon's citizens is an absolute necessity for Oregon's economy to be competitive in the knowledge economy, and was the basis for the State's 40-40-20 goal. While this formula has been debated, it is nonetheless a basic truth that a higher level of education across the state would be of benefit to our state, both economically and socially. Our intent is to increase the number of all Oregon High School students who are ready for college, who choose to go to college, and who will persist and be successful in college when they get there. We intentionally have created a model that is open to traditionally under-represented minorities. In 1997, approximately 17% of Oregon High School students were minority students; today we see 38% of our students are students of color, and that trend will certainly continue in the coming years. The Willamette Promise methods specifically allow those students to experience college-level work, and to build the confidence that they can successfully complete a degree. The model also allows for students who attend smaller or rural high schools to experience college-level work—and a large number of Oregon students attend these high schools.

Voters in Oregon have supported these programs at the ballot box. Ballot Measure 98 specifically calls for Oregon High Schools to broaden Dual Credit Opportunities. This was passed in the fall of 2016 by almost 70% of Oregon voters, and Dual Credit/Accelerated learning is one of the three major components called for in the bill. Yet there is a growing concern from proponents of the bill that loss of credits when transferring is undermining the intent of the measure, as students attempt to attend another college other than Western Oregon University.

The concept that high school students can do college-level work is of course beyond debate. The Acceleration of students to more demanding work is one of the most effective educational strategies that K-12 schools can implement, according to John Hattie's Visible Learning. All students cannot do college work, but in every high school in our state there are many students who can already successfully accomplish college-level work. This simple truth represents one of the great opportunities in our entire educational system, but it will take a true partnership to realize that potential.

between the two systems is of paramount importance. Dual Credit, to have any value to students within our system, needs to be accepted broadly within the system. The ABL Credit notation runs counter to that concept. Yet the data gathered thus far by the HECC about how Willamette Promise students perform once they go to college indicates that those students do slightly better than students in general. We emphasize that the ABL credit students of the Willamette Promise, with the notation on their transcript, are as qualified and prepared to do college-level work as any other students. Ladies and gentlemen, we have not brought barbarians to the gates. We have simply tried to open more doors for students who otherwise may not have considered college, yet had all the ability in the world.

These issues, of course, ultimately have one group who is damaged: the students. They are the ones who lose credit, they are the ones who find that college will now cost more, that the work they did in high school must be done again, and paid for as well. I'll introduce now Juriana Barboza Sagrero, a Willamette Promise student who has personally experienced this in her transition to college.