

Cerro Coso providing new ways to go to college

BY CARA JACKSON cjackson@tehachapinews.com Dec 15, 2017



The Tehachapi Education Center is located on 126 S. Snyder Ave. It is one of the sites where Cerro Coso Community College offers classes.

Cara Jackson / Tehachapi News

Cerro Coso Community College is getting ready for spring 2018 courses, and is offering some helpful ways to encourage students to take classes.

Lisa Stephens, the East Kern director for the college, shared an update on courses, funding and opportunities for students to be successful no matter their age or life stage.

"We want to do what we can, to help out as best as possible to jump-start people into college," Stephens said.

She added that they "look at students who want to dedicate their first two years to get their general education courses out the way and at a lower (cost)."

Cerro Coso does this in a variety of ways.

In high school, students can take general education courses such as math and English that count as dual enrollment. Students who take these classes and earn a passing grade can get college credit.

High school juniors have the opportunity to take classes that count toward a medical assistant certificate and can be finished with the certificate once they graduate high school. This means free tuition, and according to Stephens, this education would cost an estimated \$12,000 to \$14,000 at a private school.

The community college also was recently awarded a \$1.5 million state grant that will reduce students' cost for tuition and books. This is part of the College Promise, which gives students the opportunity to receive help during the first two years of their education. If a student applies for financial help under the College Promise, the district can waive fees.

The community college is also helping to provide education to incarcerated students in the California City Correctional Center and California Correctional Institution Tehachapi.

More than 60 classes in the institutions are being taught by instructors face-to-face with students. In the past, courses were completed through the mail and without instructor interaction.

According to Stephens, this has led to Cerro Coso being ranked No. 2 two in the nation for offering classes in prisons.

Stephens said that if these students have some sort of certificate or an associate degree once they are released, the chance a person will reoffend drops from 74 percent to 24 percent.

Stephens added that this helps raise their self-esteem, and provide better career opportunities.

Cerro Coso serves an area of 18,000 square miles in California and includes Tehachapi, Edwards Air Force Base, California City, Boron and Lake Isabella. Currently, Cerro Coso offers Tehachapi students seven programs and certificates to help prepare them for a career.

For more information, go to the Tehachapi Education Center on 126 S. Snyder Ave., call 661-823-4986 or visit cerrocoso.edu.

