SHS, RVCC collaborate to offer more programming

By NANCY A. CAVANAUGH | May 11, 2015

CLAREMONT — During the superintendent’s report at the last school board meeting, Dr. Middleton McGoodwin spoke about a meeting he had recently with Dr. Alicia Harvey-Smith, president of River Valley Community College (RVCC), to help strengthen the bond between Stevens High School (SHS) and the college. The goal of the collaboration is to expand the opportunities for students at the high school.

“We made a commitment to further work on connecting RVCC and the Claremont School District,” said McGoodwin. “The goal is to have the SHS faculty and the administration further enhance the connectivity of the Claremont School District and RVCC to expand on the opportunities for the students, as appropriate, to take courses that would be college courses.

“I don’t have any details but I want you to know there is a commitment between RVCC and the Claremont school district to work more closely together and expand the opportunities for the students,” he continued.

Current programs

During the meeting, members from RVCC gave a presentation on the programs that included testimonials from Ashley Irish and her parents, Heather and Chris (a member of the school board). Three of the current opportunities for SHS students are Catch the Wave, Running Start and eStart courses.

Running Start classes are taught by SHS faculty at a college level. Catch the Wave classes are held at the college and allow students to earn college credits early while also completing credits necessary for high school graduation. eStart classes are similar Running Start courses, but are held online.

Information about the programs is available from the guidance counselors or online—a link to Catch the Wave is on the SHS web site and the RVCC website has links to Running Start and eStart at the bottom of the home page.

Ashley took the college composition class through Running Start then signed up to take human development and college success.

“I can sit with my mom and dad at home and ask them questions. And, I was able to sit in a class at the college with 18 other students,” she said. “It was an amazing opportunity.

“When I start college next year I’ll be able to take four classes instead of five,” Ashley continued. “It is great to be able to experience it ahead of time.”

Heather wanted her daughter to be prepared.
“What I heard was that the kids would go off to college and didn’t quite know what to expect. I jumped on board so she would have the ability to fail in the comfort of her own home. A lot of our students got to college and failed,” said Heather.

“It has been an interesting experience. There have been some bumps in the road,” she continued. “The success in college class, it doesn’t make sense not to have it. It should be available in Catch the Wave.”

Chris, though, wasn’t sold on it right away. “It was eye opening. I went with her to orientation with 40 people in the room. To be in a room of adults like that,” he said. “I’m impressed with how the school handled it and embraced Ashley.”

**Transferring credit**

One of the most asked question about the programs is whether or not the credits earned at RVCC will transfer to another college, said Harvey-Smith.

“The credits transfer,” she said as she referred to a list of schools, including state colleges in New Hampshire and around the country where students had been able to transfer the credits.

“I received some additional information … if a student is admitted to a community college as well as one of our state colleges, then after the two year program at the community college the student can have complete 100 percent transfer of those courses to the state college," said McGoodwin in his report.

This would allow the student at the state college to start as a junior.

**Barriers**

Pat Barry, principal at SHS, talked about some of the barriers, including getting students to sign up.

“I think once we have a few more students signed up it will be like a rolling snowball. It is a matter of getting the word of mouth out there and piquing their interest. Once someone breaks down the barrier, others will follow." said Barry.

“Being able to offset the cost however we can. Some students don’t have transportation. The classes at the college are on a college schedule, not a Stevens’ schedule,” she continued. “A lot of them work, which is another barrier.”

In spite of these barriers, she feels the programs will grow.

“In the next year we will see substantial increases,” she said.

“We’re tip-toeing towards college opportunities for every student,” said Chris.
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