

Highlighting Centralia College East

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Centralia College East

Students use computers in a commons area at Centralia College's East Campus on Friday evening in Morton.

For about 33 years, the Centralia College East campus has been offering classes and services to residents in East Lewis County who may otherwise not be able to access them.

A long drive from the main campus of the college in Centralia, the East campus came to fruition after Bev Butters and April Doolittle established a need for a satellite of the college.

In 1983, the first class met in the East County Center, originally utilizing one classroom at Morton High School.

The temporary agreement allowed the satellite to offer classes to residents of the area, offering an alternative for those unwilling to drive to Centralia for classes.

The campus has since grown and in 1997 the East County Center moved into a new 5,000-square-foot building adjacent to the high school. Kelli Bloomstrom, dean of transitional education and dean of Centralia College East, said the campus is important for a number of reasons.

"The college's mission is to improve people's lives through lifelong learning," she said. "Sometimes because we live in Eastern Lewis County traveling to main campus is often difficult. This provides an opportunity for access and it's a good entry point (for students)."

As a good beginning place for students, the campus offers classes on a smaller scale. Bloomstrom said the offerings are limited because of limited faculty numbers and classroom sizes, but said that classes are taught similarly to those offered at the main campus.

The campus utilizes face-to-face classroom time as well as interactive television courses where instructors from main campus lecture via the television. The interactive television courses provide a two way interaction: Students can listen to the lecture and also talk to the instructor.

Although the college does not offer any bachelor degree courses, Bloomstrom said it would be wonderful if they were able to in the future. Students are currently able to get an associate of arts degree, a degree that is designed to easily transfer to other colleges.

The offerings at the campus are plentiful.

Developmental education coursework, or pre-college courses are available, preparing students for college level work. Adult basic education and basic skill classes are also available at the school.

Other adult special interest courses are offered for non-credit. Typically a small fee is associated with them. For example, Bloomstrom said, a person could take a pilates class either for college credit, or just as a community member for fitness and personal enrichment.

Among its offerings, the college has some technical computer based courses available for those seeking credits as a medical administrative assistant, for example, and some of the nursing and diesel program prerequisites are offered.

To meet a growing demand of varying interests, the East campus added a

snowshoeing class and roadside geology class, both of which are new this quarter.

Courses vary from quarter to quarter, Bloomstrom said, and right now about 40 classes are being offered at the East campus.

The campus has 7 to 10 faculty members at any given time and two pro-rata faculty members.

“Because we have adjuncts, we don’t offer the same courses every quarter so faculty rotates,” Bloomstrom said. “We have probably about 15 adjuncts, but they are not always working every quarter.”

Pro-rata faculty are teachers who would typically teach the same classes every quarter, Bloomstrom said, while the adjunct staff teaches courses that their expertise lies in.

Currently the campus has a headcount of about 127 students, a number that is slightly higher than the average.

Most of the students reside in Lewis County, although Bloomstrom said once in awhile people from Pierce County enroll for classes at the college.

As a graduate of Centralia College who started her educational path at the East campus, Bloomstrom said the school provides a great opportunity for those in the area.

“I think it’s just a great place to start your degree or come for a kind of fun class,” she said. “I think it’s important to be able to have a campus in our backyard... Centralia College means a lot in general to the community and it’s just wonderful we can share that here in the east.”