2008

Getting a Jump Start on College Credit
By Sherry Squires
Boise State University Communications and Marketing

Entering college is a major transition, and the expectations of college-level courses can be overwhelming for some students.

But a growing number of high school students are getting a jump-start on college and learning just what it takes to be successful by participating in concurrent enrollment programs. The programs allow students to earn both high school and college credit for select courses.

Students in concurrent enrollment classes study the same topics and complete the same requirements as those studying on a university campus. But they do so in a comfortable environment – their own high school classroom – and earn credit without driving to the university. High school teachers who meet qualifications as university adjunct faculty oversee the courses.

Also known throughout Idaho as dual credit, concurrent enrollment programs are collaborative partnerships between high schools and colleges. In the Treasure Valley, Boise State University contracts with a number of high schools to provide rigorous college courses at the high schools.

Boise State’s program is 10 years old and has grown by 36 percent in just the past year, according to director Fabiola Juarez-Coca. More and more students — 1,188 of them this past spring semester — are taking advantage of the program, she said.

Concurrent enrollment is offered in a wide variety of classes, from art to biology, foreign language to political science. Credit from these academic classes can be applied to any degree a student chooses upon entering college. The credits are also transferable to all Idaho colleges and universities, and most institutions outside of the state.

There are a number of incentives for students to participate. For example, they can earn almost one full year’s worth of college credits through the program at a much reduced-cost. The students pay $65 per credit, meaning that a typical 3-4 credit class costs them $195-$260. The same class would average about $900 if they were enrolled as a part-time college student this year.

Along with the benefit of college credits, high school students also have access to a number of college resources. For example, concurrent enrollment students at Boise State have access to the Boise State library for research, some campus events, the Writing Center, tutoring labs, and are issued a student ID card and an email account.

Teachers report that signing up for a concurrent enrollment class for dual credit often changes a student’s perspective on school.
“High achievers in high school need to be challenged beyond what is good enough to make the grade,” said Melinda Lathrop, an English teacher at Homedale High School who teaches concurrent enrollment classes. “When they are expected to write and think like college students, their attitude changes. No longer are they cruising through high school. They’re reaching for excellence, and they’ve got the credits to show for it.”