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## **Eastern Promise program for high school college credit kicks off Nov. 4**

LA GRANDE, ORE. – A unique program that will expand the ways high school students can earn college credit – and possibly even graduate high school with an associate’s degree – kicks off on Nov. 4 at Eastern Oregon University.

The Eastern Promise is a collaboration between the InterMountain Education Service District (IMESD), Blue Mountain and Treasure Valley community colleges, Eastern Oregon University and the 20 school districts in the eastern Oregon region served by IMESD. The program creates additional opportunities for high school students to participate in college-level courses, as well as earn college credits and/or certificates, while still in high school, a big money savings for families. The goal is that the Eastern Promise will increase the number of eastern Oregon high school students who are prepared for and attend college directly from high school.

This follows along with the Governor’s “40-40-20” plan of having 40 percent of Oregonians earning a four-year degree, 40 percent earning an associate’s degree or post-secondary certificate, and 20 percent earning a high school diploma or equivalent. BMCC President John Turner, TVCC President Dana Young, EOU President Bob Davies, IMESD Superintendent Dr. Mark Mulvihill, and Malheur ESD Superintendent Tim Labrousse were key drivers behind the Eastern Promise and the collaboration between K-12 and higher education, as well as the program’s parallel goals with the 40-40-20 plan.

“The Eastern Promise has received significant interest throughout the education community due to its vision,” Mulvihill said. “The Governor’s Office, in particular, has hailed the Eastern Promise as a concrete example of a plan to break down silos necessary to achieving the 40-40-20 state goal. We know that students significantly increase their chances for degree attainment if they complete college courses in high school. For every credit earned, a student reduces the odds of falling between the cracks.”

Currently, there are just three “pathways” to early college education in high school: Advanced Placement testing (which requires conformance to external curriculum and traditionally has low enrollment in smaller high schools); Dual Credit (which depends upon high instructor qualifications and has limited options in many high schools); and Dual Enrollment/Expanded Options (which can be very expensive for high schools and presents geographical challenges with the large distances between high schools and post-secondary providers).

The Eastern Promise solves many of these issues. It includes the aforementioned previous pathways, but adds a fourth, giving it a unique twist. First, it will be proficiency-based. Partner institutions will employ internally-developed learning outcome assessments to award college credit, with regional Professional Learning Communities of teachers

and college staff collaborating regularly. Second, there will be local direction with the Eastern Promise. High schools will direct who teaches and who takes eligible coursework, while the higher education partners will direct proficiency assessments to assure control and alignment of the curriculum to maintain a high academic standard. Third, there will be local flexibility. Educational partners will be able to collaborate to offer the highest level of opportunity and support for students.

“The Eastern Promise is unique in that key leaders from K-12 and higher education are willing to ‘think outside the box’ for our students,” Mulvihill said. “The boards and administration from EOU, BMCC, TVCC, IMESD and the area school districts are pushing through barriers to ensure that all students have opportunities to earn college credit while in high school. Innovative aspects include proficiency-based courses and regional Professional Learning Communities, in which teachers from high schools, community colleges, and the university sit down together to align curriculum and develop assessments.”

Mulvihill and BMCC President John Turner have been asked by the Chancellor’s Office of the Oregon University System to speak at a Nov. 1 40-40-20 symposium in Corvallis about the Eastern Promise and to share their work as an example of collaboration and perseverance.

The Nov. 4 kickoff at EOU – which begins at 9 a.m. with a celebration – will bring together high school teachers from throughout the region who have been identified to teach the first of the Eastern Promise courses (Math 111, Biology and Speech), college instructors who have been identified to work with the high school teachers in Professional Learning Communities, and high school and school district administrators who support the implementation of the Eastern Promise.

After a welcome celebration, high school teachers and college instructors will meet with the initial task of identifying and agreeing upon proficiencies and assessments which will be the foundation of the Eastern Promise courses.

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