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Modesto Junior College primed to expand ways for high school students to take college classes

MODESTO, CA. – Modesto Junior College is poised to dramatically increase the number of dual enrollment courses available to local high school students in the next school year, trustees of the Yosemite Community College District learned at the Board Meeting on Monday night.

Dual enrollment courses offered under a College and Career Access Pathway (CCAP) agreement give students free access to earn college credits while they're still in high school. MJC offered just three such CCAP classes in the fall of 2022. In the fall 2023 semester, however, MJC expects to offer 37 CCAP courses to more than 1,100 high school students.

By comparison, Columbia College – YCCD's other two-year campus – offered 19 CCAP courses in the fall and 13 in the current semester.

"We're thrilled about next year," said Brian Sanders, MJC's interim vice president of instruction. "We're going from a program with dual enrollment options that were not well defined to a group of engaged partners all across our service area."

MJC officials said the increase in dual enrollment classes is a result of positive discussions with leaders of local high school districts, who have urged the college to expand its choices to high school students.

"Outstanding progress has been made," said Scott Siegel, an education consultant hired by the YCCD who participated in the talks with local school districts. He is the former superintendent of the Ceres Unified School District.

"This is a huge win for your organization, the high school districts and, most of all, the students in the MJC attendance area," Siegel told trustees.

The CCAP designation is important, not just academically but also financially – per-unit fees are waived for high school students and their high schools provide their college textbooks. Even the book cost is declining as increasing numbers of college courses are taught using free online resources.

All the classes are held on high school campuses, either in person or with a high school teacher providing daily over-the-shoulder guidance as students work through an online course taught by a college instructor.

The three largest high school districts in the county – in Modesto, Turlock and Ceres – are expected to offer an expanded menu of MJC courses in the fall. Other partner districts include Patterson, Hughson, Hilmar, Waterford and Aspire, with others also close to reaching agreements with MJC.

The agreements set a goal of 75% of high school students passing at least one CCAP class prior to graduation. The college credits are automatically placed on students' transcripts when they pass the course and are transferrable to other community colleges as well as most four-year universities. Moreover, the dual enrollment classes check boxes for both high school A through G university preparation requirements and college general education courses required for transfer students.

The CCAP agreements must be approved by the YCCD board and each local school district board before they take effect. It is expected that the new agreements will be on the boards' agendas in the coming months.

One of the challenges with offering more CCAP courses, Sanders explained, is finding enough qualified instructors to teach them. It's not practical to have MJC professors drive to high school campuses all around the region. Instead, the college has focused on two more realistic alternatives.

The first is what is known as an instructional services agreement between MJC and a high school with a teacher who meets minimum qualifications in the subject area. That instructor then can teach an MJC course as part of her or his daily teaching assignment. [Minimum qualifications](#) are established at the state level and specify a master's degree to teach core academic subjects like English, math or sociology, or any degree plus six years of professional experience in hands-on fields such as welding, or automotive repair.

The second method is called an embedded model. It leverages the experience of an MJC professor, the reach of technology and the assistance of a high school teacher. A pilot program begun in January in Ceres involves U.S. history classes at two high schools – Central Valley and Ceres. The 47 students can earn credits toward their high school graduation as well as three units of college credit under what is known as an asynchronous structure. Essentially, the students are taking two classes at once on the same topic.

"The MJC instructor creates and organizes the content online, including assessments, and the high school teacher takes them through the content, assigns homework and leads discussions," explained Siegel.

In addition to history next fall, Sanders said other CCAP courses will focus on social sciences (sociology, psychology), languages (English and Spanish), arts and performance (music, art, literature), ag mechanics, and fitness and health. Specific offerings are arranged between each high school and MJC's Outreach and Community Partnerships Department.

High school students in districts that don't have CCAP agreements with MJC can still sign up to take classes online, Siegel said.

Sanders and other MJC officials are excited about what the expanded dual enrollment program means not just for students, but also for the college and community.

“We certainly hope that these high school students could become full-time MJC students, and begin their college and career journeys,” said Leslie Beggs, the President of the Board of Trustees.

Henry Yong, the Chancellor of YCCD said dual enrollment will increase the community’s access to higher education, and give high school students a head start with earning college credits early.

Chad Redwing, the Interim President of MJC, who was just appointed last week, said MJC stands ready to welcome high school students, and that the college looks forward to serving them.

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