Grants Pass Daily Courier

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**Enrollment, program offerings grow at Rogue Community College**

*By Vickie Aldous of the Daily Courier*

Rogue Community College released an annual report this week detailing growing enrollment, an increase in students earning certificates for jobs and an incoming group of nursing students this fall that more than doubles typical numbers.

However, the state's method to help fund community colleges isn't keeping up with enrollment growth at RCC, according to the community college with campuses in Grants Pass, Medford and White City.

The college had the full-time equivalent of 4,034 students for the 2025-2026 school year, but the full-time equivalent of 888 students aren't fully recognized by the state's funding method — leading to an estimated $10.6 million in state funding not coming to RCC, the college estimates.

RCC is working with Oregon legislators to try and fix the funding method that hurts colleges that bounced back the most from a widespread enrollment plunge during the COVID-19 pandemic.

While Oregon community colleges on average increased their enrollment by 17.8% from the fall of 2021 to the fall of 2025, RCC's enrollment shot up 52%, the annual report said.



*JULIE ANDERSON / Daily Courier, 2024*

Allen "Trapper" Crawford (in blue), instructor for the engine repair class at the Redwood Campus at Rogue Community College, teaches students (clockwise from left) Richie Hamblin, Ben Grahn, Hayden Snyder and Annastasia Krieser the inner workings of an engine in 2024. RCC is reporting a jump in enrollment, but officials say funding isn't keeping up with growth.

RCC is funded with a mix of state money, tuition and fees, and local property taxes.

The college served a total of 10,247 individual students for the 2025-2026 academic year. That number represents students attending classes for college credit, as well as noncredit programs, according to the annual report.

RCC has long been known for consulting closely with local industries to develop training programs for in-demand, family-wage jobs.

The college continues to expand programs in fields like healthcare, skilled trades, transportation, information technology and business. During the 2025-2026 academic year, RCC awarded 479 career and technical education certificates, up from 424 the previous year, the annual report said.

"Our growth reflects the increasing number of students who are choosing RCC to build careers, transfer to universities and create new opportunities for themselves and their families," RCC President Randy Weber said in a statement. "At the same time, our partnerships across Southern Oregon are helping us respond to the needs of our communities and employers."

This fall, RCC will have 149 incoming nursing students, more than double the typical size of 60 incoming students.

To supplement their training in the real world, nurses also practice their skills through high-fidelity simulations that create scenarios with diverse patients, rare medical conditions and other situations, according to RCC.

In 2025, the college celebrated the opening of a building at its Grants Pass campus that was completely renovated to serve as a healthcare training site for jobs like nursing assisting, dental assisting and phlebotomy.

Also in 2025, RCC created a fast-track program to increase the number of trained childcare providers and early childhood educators. A grant covered tuition and books for 30 students, and the program includes paid internships.

For years, the Grants Pass campus offered automotive technology training, while the White City campus provided diesel technology training. New transportation technology centers under construction at the two

campuses will offer both automotive and diesel technology programs, RCC said.

Teenagers can earn college credits — and even associate degrees — while still in high school.

"RCC serves students from every public high school in Jackson and Josephine counties, as well as most charter and private schools in the region, through its college credit opportunities," said RCC Director of Marketing and Communications Jason Hall.

Students earned 20,343 college credits and 42 associate degrees during the last school year — saving families more than $3 million in college costs, according to the annual report.

At Grants Pass High School alone, 11 students earned associate degrees and five earned career pathway certificates, saving more than $509,000, the report said.

Through the Early College program, high school students take RCC classes and their high schools often cover the costs through various funding sources. In the College Now program, qualified high school teachers offer courses at their schools that also provide college credit, at no cost to students, Hall said.

"Funding and eligibility vary by school and program, so we encourage families to check with their high school about the options available to them," he said.

Meanwhile, a new economic impact study released by the Oregon Community College Association said RCC creates at least a $325.6 million boost to the economies of Josephine and Jackson counties.

The largest economic benefit was the estimated $272 million in extra annual income earned by workers who attended RCC.

The average RCC graduate with an associate degree earns $7,800 more per year compared to a worker with a high school diploma, the study said.

"When students gain the skills to move into higher-paying careers, their families benefit, local businesses benefit and our communities are stronger," Weber said in a statement.

The study was based on data from the 2023-2024 fiscal year, so the economic impacts could be larger today.

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