



For Immediate Release

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Agreement Improves Access to Undergraduate Education for Idaho Students

By Kurt Liebich, President, Idaho State Board of Education

For years, the Idaho State Board of Education has been working to make it easier for students to attend college after graduating from high school. The Board's Direct Admissions program is a prime example. Since it was launched in 2015, Direct Admissions has enabled thousands of high school graduates to be automatically admitted either to six or all eight of Idaho's colleges and universities free of charge, rather than spend many hours and lots of money applying to each institution.

I am pleased to announce that Idaho's public colleges and universities are building on that with a new agreement that allows community college students who earn an associate degree to move directly into higher level programs at our four-year institutions if they so choose. The move will be simple because these students will already be enrolled through a Co-admissions/Co-enrollment agreement signed by all eight institutions.

A student enrolled at a community college can co-enroll at a four-year institution, meaning when they finish their associate degree studies, they can immediately begin attending classes needed to obtain a baccalaureate degree from one of the

three universities or from Lewis-Clark State College. The agreement even allows community college students to begin taking upper division courses from the four-year institutions before they complete their two-year degrees. This is similar to how K-12 students can begin taking college courses before they graduate from high school through Idaho's Advanced Opportunities program.

“We wanted one agreement to make it simple and straightforward with the same rules for all students no matter where they start,” the State Board's Chief Academic Officer Dr. TJ Bliss said. “It used to be that each institution had its own agreement with the other institutions, so we had numerous agreements with various requirements. The situation wasn't user friendly for students.”

The new statewide agreement states: “Participating students who complete an associate degree with a 2.0 grade point average at the two-year college will be guaranteed admission to the partner four-year institution as a condition of this partnership.”

Bliss says the agreement was a decade in the making and that it is intended to increase degree completion by enabling students to move with ease through the system no matter where they live. “In setting the stage to increase the number of students moving from our community colleges to our four-year institutions, we are also making college more affordable because it costs less to attend a community college,” Bliss said. “Taking general education courses at a community college is less expensive than taking those same courses at a university. Our goal with this agreement is to create pathways for more students to start their postsecondary education at a two-year college and then move to the four-year institution for major-specific classes.”

Online Idaho

The Co-admissions/Co-enrollment agreement works well in partnership with another Board initiative intended to make college more affordable and available to all Idahoans.

Online Idaho, the Board's digital campus, continues to grow and will begin showcasing more of our institutions' online courses and degree pathways next year. Students enrolled in one institution will be able to take courses from other institutions online, no matter where they live in Idaho. And all Idahoans will be able to explore degrees, programs and pathways at all eight public institutions, helping them meet their training, education and workforce needs.

Our colleges and universities serve specific regions and each have roles to fill. The Co-admissions/Co-enrollment agreement and Online Idaho are part of the Board's "systemness" approach, coordinating institution expertise and resources to provide expanded access to higher education. These initiatives are intended to help students save money so that they can maintain momentum, graduate, and join Idaho's workforce with the knowledge and skills needed for success.

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