

Changes coming this fall to Clark College Running Start program

This fall brings important changes to Running Start, the popular program which allows students to earn college credits as they complete their high school education.

Under legislation passed by the Washington State Legislature, there is now a limit to the combined high school and college credits that the state will fund for each student.

What the changes mean

Generally, a student can still receive funding through Running Start if he or she is taking less than 120 percent of the combined course load for a full-time student (FTE), which is considered 1.2 FTEs. The combined course load would include the student's high school and college classes. If students take additional credits, they would pay full tuition and fees.

For example, a student who is enrolled in 15 credits at the college could take no more than one class at their high school in order to have all of their credits funded through Running Start. A student who is enrolled full-time at their high school would only be eligible to receive tuition for three credits through Running Start.

What students need to do

Students who had planned to enroll beyond the new limits

have options. They may choose to reduce their schedules, or they may provide parental approval to exceed the state-funded limit and pay the college tuition. That is done by using the new Running Start Enrollment Verification Form. The form provides information to help students and parents know which combinations add up to a tuition-free schedule. The form and additional information are available at www.clark.edu/runningstart.

All Running Start students must have their schedules reviewed by their high school counselors. They must also submit the new Running Start Enrollment Verification Form to the Clark College Running Start office. The deadline is Sept. 9.

Forms may be mailed to: Clark College Running Start, 1933 Fort Vancouver Way, Vancouver, WA 98663. However, students and parents are strongly urged to bring the form to the Running Start office so that staff members may respond to additional questions. Driving directions and parking maps are available at www.clark.edu/maps.

Clark College reaches out

Clark College has taken special steps this summer to let students, parents and high school

counselors and registrars know about these changes.

Running Start staff members sent information about the changes to current students by Clark student email and by U.S. mail.

The same information was sent to regional high school counselors and registrars, also by mail and email. On Aug. 18 and 24, the college held informational meetings that were attended by 32 high school counselors and registrars.

According to Vice President of Student Affairs William Belden, "We are working with our high school partners across the region to let students and parents know about these changes so they can make informed decisions. Running Start is a very popular program, and Clark's Running Start program is the largest in the state."

What student and parents need to know (information provided by the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges):

What are the recent changes to the Running Start program?

- Starting this fall, the State Legislature will limit the combined high school and college credits the State will fund for each student.

- As a result, colleges will now

collect tuition on any credits a Running Start student chooses to take beyond a combined 1.2 FTE course load of high school and college courses.

- Students who stay at or below 1.2 FTE of a combined high school/college schedule may still attend Running Start tuition-free.

- Students who choose to enroll above the 1.2 FTE will pay per-credit college tuition for every credit in excess of the combined limit.

- Whether the credits are paid by the student or tuition-free, Running Start students will continue to receive dual (high school and college) credit.

- To plan their schedule, students will use a new, statewide Running Start Enrollment Verification Form available at their high school or college.

- A 1.2 FTE chart is available to help students and parents know which combinations add up to a tuition-free schedule. It is located on the new, statewide Running Start Enrollment Verification Form.

- Also new: Running Start students will be charged tuition for college credits exceeding 15 in any one quarter. This does not apply to those enrolled in vocational programs or at Skills Centers.