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CWI funds could help Idahoans 'Complete College'



Greg Kreller/APT

Above: Will Cooney, of Caldwell, a tutor and student at the College of Western Idaho, left, assists student Alexandria Perez, of Caldwell, with a math question Wednesday afternoon at the Nampa school's tutoring lab. **Below:** The College of Western Idaho campus in Nampa.

Otter: Funding for community colleges would bolster education approach

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NAMPA — The College of Western Idaho is positioned to be a key player in Idaho's education goals for 2020.

Assuming the Idaho Legislature keeps Gov. Butch Otter's budget recommendations intact as they relate to CWI, the college is poised to receive nearly \$500,000 in funding to bolster its education offerings and retention efforts. Otter presented his budget recommendations to the Idaho Legislature on Monday at his State of the State address.



Butch Otter
Governor

In a speech filled with references to the importance of education, College of Western Idaho — and community colleges overall — were big winners in Otter's state of the state address Monday. Otter's proposed budget includes millions of dollars related

to community colleges and higher education, and the governor encouraged the formation of even more community colleges across the state, citing the College of Western Idaho, and its president Bert Glandon, as shining examples

to follow.

"It's forever changed the way education is delivered here in Idaho's most populated area," Otter said. "It's hard to even imagine this Valley now without CWI playing a significant role in our future."

Here's a rundown of some of the items Otter suggested in his budget that could benefit CWI, which is based in Nampa and whose district includes Ada and Canyon counties.

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College

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GENERAL EDUCATION CERTIFICATE

The biggest chunk of money in Otter's proposal is \$276,900 for CWI's new approach to general education, which is a 36-credit course of study that would award students with a general education academic certificate. It falls under the Complete College Idaho initiative from the Idaho State Board of Education — an initiative with the ultimate goal that 60 percent of Idahoans ages 25-34 will have a degree or certificate by the year 2020.

Brenda Pettinger, assistant vice president for academic affairs at CWI, said general education has historically been a collection of disconnected courses. The goal with this certificate is to make it more cohesive.

"They aren't just courses that exist separate from one another, we have designed it in a way that there are certain threads that run

through it," Pettinger said. "It's been designed as a comprehensive program of studies rather than just a series of courses a student would take to meet that requirement."

The new approach would begin in the fall, and the state dollars would provide funding for three positions to help run it: an education coordinator, assessment coordinator and a data collection and reporting analyst.

The certificate is aimed not only at students already enrolled in college, but it should also appeal to high school students, Pettinger said. Dual-credit enrollment has risen rapidly at CWI, and the college plans to capitalize on that.

"We feel like this is a realistic goal for high school students to complete their academic certificate prior to graduating high school," she said. "The hope is that if a student gets that far into their program, they're going to go on to college. They're going to see themselves as a college student and capable of those last steps toward an associate degree."

The college also takes into consideration those individuals

who have been in the workplace for a number of years and might want to formalize their education with a degree but don't want to go back to school and start at the beginning. Pettinger said one of the goals is to create an avenue for those students to receive credit for what they have learned in the workplace and go from there in their education.

"We don't foresee challenges to getting this approved and on the books for fall," she said.

MANUFACTURING AND INDUSTRY

CWI President Bert Glandon said he has been busy advocating for a piece of the funding in Otter's budget under the Professional-Technical Education Advanced Manufacturing Initiative, a \$1 million appropriation. CWI will receive \$190,000 of that for advanced manufacturing training.

"Across the state we're looking at how we build a really strong advanced manufacturing component that will serve the various industries and areas that will not only recruit businesses to Idaho, but also provide a workforce for those businesses," Glandon said.

"We can use that (funding) and more to make sure that we have the right high-quality training programs in place for technicians to ensure that manufacturing is a growth industry to help the economy."

Another piece of Otter's budget that Glandon said he is excited about is \$5 million in "Industry Sector Grants," which will be awarded by the state's Workforce Development Council. According to Otter's budget team at the Division of Financial Management, the grants are intended to incentivize partnerships between Idaho post-secondary education institutions and industry "to develop a pool of skilled workers that meet the needs of Idaho businesses."

CWI has already started that process with a partnership between the college and Western States CAT to run a program that trains a small amount of future CAT employees under a specific curriculum to prepare them for jobs within the company.

Glandon is working with other administrators at the college on three grant proposals for that funding, the first of which

is scheduled to go out around the beginning of February. CWI would partner with West Valley Medical Center, Saint Alphonsus and St. Luke's hospitals to train students for a wide variety of health care jobs.

"This is a huge breakthrough in terms of how education, business and industry can work together and partner up to actually have valid programs that are going to move quickly from the education component into jobs," Glandon said.

BUDGET APPROVAL

The Joint Finance Appropriations Committee will begin the budget hearing process this month and continue throughout much of the legislative session. Appropriations bills will be considered sometime in February or March, where the House of Representatives and Senate will vote on them.



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