

Community Education Center Provides Support for Underserved Populations

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OGDEN, Utah – The newest addition to the Ogden City College Town Initiative is a center designed to attract more community members to help them obtain a post-secondary education.

The public is invited to the grand opening of the Community Education Center on Oct. 3 from 6 to 8 p.m. A short program is set for 6:30 p.m., followed by a ribbon cutting, reception and tours. The center is located at 2955 Harrison Blvd. Ogden, Utah, in the lower level of the United Way/Red Cross building.

The Weber State University Community Education Center is a one-stop center providing support for underserved populations including minority, low-income and first-generation community members to access and complete post-secondary education.

Bruce Davis, vice provost and dean of Continuing Education, said the university is excited to be involved in this new effort to reach out to more students and families in the community.

“A university education helps students and their families live richer, fuller lives,” Davis said. “We want to bring these learning opportunities to those who have not had them in the past, inspire within them hopes and dreams for a better future, and provide personalized support for individuals and families with special challenges and needs. We appreciate the partners across the university and in the community that have helped make this dream a reality.”

Ogden City Council Chair Bart Blair said WSU’s efforts to make education more attainable are outstanding.

“This center will serve as a key community resource to provide education to individuals who would otherwise not have access to these opportunities,” Blair said.

The center includes three offices: the Community Education Center, the Melba S. Lehner Children’s School and the Community Research Extension of the Center for Community Engaged Learning.

The Community Education Center will pair individuals with advisors to assist them in entering the university.

“It’s not just going to be, ‘Here’s a packet — this is what you do,’” said Luis

Lopez, director of the center. “When people from an underrepresented community want to go to college, they’ll be connected to a person from our center to walk them through the process until they’re sitting down in class.”

The center is also partnered with Weber County School District to offer a conversational ESL class. Lopez said soon the center will offer a drop-in lab GED preparation course in Spanish as well as space to take the GED.

The children’s school, which is affiliated with the Department of Child and Family Studies, will be for the children of individuals who receive services from the center. The school offers a developmentally appropriate learning program with structured activities designed specifically for the children.

“It’s more than a daycare,” said Brian Stecklein, director of program development for Continuing Education. “The community members who come to our center will get an education while their children get an education, too.” The school also serves as a training lab for students majoring in early childhood, early childhood education and elementary education.

The Community Research Extension (CRE) will assess the success of the programs of the Center for Community Engaged Learning, and it will provide research services by connecting community members to campus experts. The center will also provide space and resources to community projects. Currently, the CRE is helping with the United Way’s “Ogden United Promise Neighborhood Grant.” This federal grant program will study ways that so nonprofit organizations and government entities can help transform the community.

“Our vision is to break down social and historical barriers in order to create an environment of trust, collaboration and inclusiveness between WSU and under-represented communities in Weber and Davis counties,” Lopez said. “Our mission is to increase the enrollment of non-traditional, under-represented populations in post-secondary programs.”

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