

A springboard to opportunity



Three Clark College Transitional Studies students celebrate earning their high school diplomas during Clark's 2015 Commencement ceremony. Beginning in the 2015 summer quarter, students like them have a new option for earning their diploma called High School 21+.

Starting this summer quarter, adults in Southwest Washington who lack a high school diploma have a new, streamlined way to earn this valuable educational achievement. Clark College has adopted High School 21+, a new program in Washington State that is designed to help adults gain the education they need to participate in today's workforce.

"There are so many adults who are afraid of returning to school or who are worried about the GED exam and that stands in their way of defining and reaching their goals," said Monica Wilson, Transitional Studies Program Manager. "High School 21+ gives adults a new pathway to meet their goals with additional supports from the Transitional Studies team to help make the process as easy as possible."

High School 21+, which was launched in 2014 in 12 community and technical colleges by the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, is open to all Washington residents aged 21 or older who do not have a high school degree. While students have always been able to earn high school diplomas or prepare for the GED through two-year colleges, this new program helps remove some obstacles to the process. Students can earn credit for skills gained through work or military history, helping to reduce the amount of time spent in classes that are unnecessary. Also, the program infuses basic skills classes—things like computer skills or writing that students often need to take, but that previously

did not apply toward their high school credential—with rigorous academic coursework, allowing them to apply toward a diploma.

According to the U.S. Census, 10 percent of Washington State adults (defined as 25 years or older) do not have a high school degree. Meanwhile, according to recent studies, more than two-thirds of all jobs in Washington State will require postsecondary education by 2018—the sixth-highest rate in the nation.

High School 21+ is designed to make earning a high school diploma more accessible. Classes cost \$25 a quarter and books are provided for no additional charge; classes are offered at two locations, during times that fit working adults' schedules. And, because federal regulations now require a high school diploma or equivalency to receive financial aid, High School 21+ makes college more accessible as well for thousands of Washington State residents.

Clark College's Department of Transitional Studies launched High School 21+ in the 2015 summer quarter with 41 students enrolled. Already, five of them are expected to earn their high school degrees in fall quarter.

To learn more about Clark College's High School 21+ program, visit www.clark.edu/cc/hs21.

Photo: Clark College/Jenny Shadley