



McHenry County College, District 200 team up to offer associate's degree for graduating high school seniors

Earning a high school diploma is a significant milestone for any teen. But in a few years, Woodstock and Woodstock North high school graduates also will have the opportunity to walk out of the gymnasium with a college associate's degree in hand.

Woodstock Community Unit School District 200 and McHenry County College have teamed up to offer McHenry County's first Dual Degree program where graduating seniors can obtain an Associate of Arts degree through a combination of dual-credit high school coursework and some courses at MCC.

"We're excited to work with our partners at MCC to offer our students this outstanding opportunity to advance their education while in high school. This program is a substantial economic benefit to our district families as we continue to work to provide a value added education for our community," District 200 Superintendent Mike Moan said.

As the average cost of college in Illinois rises to nearly \$25,000 per year, many students and their parents are forced to make some difficult decisions about post-secondary education. In addition to being well-prepared for college, the Dual Degree program gives students an added financial advantage.

"This partnership demonstrates the focus that we all have on student success," said Dr. Clint Gabbard, MCC President. "Providing students with the opportunity to learn how to navigate college while at the same time completing their degree reinforces MCC's commitment to being the place to get students to that next step in their educational journey."

The estimated cost of the Dual Degree program for Woodstock students is about \$2,000 without textbooks compared to an estimated cost of \$7,000 including fees and textbooks to complete an associate's degree at McHenry County College after high school, or nearly \$30,000 for equivalent coursework at an in-state, four-year university.

There is no tuition for classes taught at the high schools, although there may be some class fees. Classes taken at MCC will be offered at one-third of the tuition cost. Students who have financial need may also meet requirements to have tuition costs waived.

A Dual Degree informational night will be held for students and parents at 7 p.m. on Oct. 10 at both Woodstock and Woodstock North high schools.

Freshman can apply for the program beginning Oct. 15 through Oct. 31 and will begin their dual degree coursework the following summer. Classes include computer literacy, U.S. history, chemistry, social media marketing, and many others. Students will be required to take some classes at MCC over three summers in order to complete the program.

Amanda Valdes-Garcia, a 2018 graduate of Woodstock North High School, was able to complete about 30 college credits before she graduated through a combination of dual credit high school courses and classes at MCC and Columbia College. She is now working on her bachelor's degree in marketing at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Valdes said she would have taken advantage of the Dual Degree program at Woodstock North if it was offered.

"I definitely find this useful," Valdes said. "Dual credit classes helped me ease into college. You really get to figure out what you would like to do. MCC is a great place. It's nearby and they offer a lot of resources for students."

The program is designed for students who plan to pursue a Bachelor of Arts degree and for satisfying the general education requirements at many universities, particularly those in Illinois. Students are encouraged to check with the four-year university they plan to attend to make sure the courses' credits will transfer.

"The more opportunities we provide students to get to that next step—whatever that may be — the more we are fulfilling our role as the community's college," said Gabbard.

To learn more about the Woodstock D200 and MCC dual-degree program, visit www.woodstockschoools.org/dualdegree or www.mchenry.edu/dualdegree.

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