

# Resources for the atypical student

STORY AND PHOTO BY IAN VAN ORDEN  
MANAGING EDITOR

photo by Ian Van Orden

Apprehension upon beginning college is no new issue. Many who first arrive on a college campus will feel overwhelmed, perhaps out of place in the new environment.

Those that often have the most trouble, though, are the ones that do not fall into the typical college age bracket. Those who are returning to school after a break, or perhaps those who are skipping ahead.

Joan Jagodnik, an academic and career coach at CCC focuses on helping these students with their transition. The Clackamas Print spoke with Jagodnik about what issues these students face, and what resources are available to help them succeed.

**TCP: Tell me a little about yourself.**

**A:** I've been here just a little over a year, in this position. I started in November 2017. I actually worked here previously eighteen years ago, in a different advising role. In between times I worked at Portland State University and Marylhurst University and I think I even worked for Portland Community College for a while in between there. So, always kind of in that student services, doing advising, all student service kind of roles. I love the community college, I actually attended Clackamas Community College right out of high school and so was very happy to work here before and happy to come back. It's a great place to be.

**Q: Tell me about your role here. What do you do specifically?**

**A:** So, my title is academic and career coach. There are, I forget how many of us with that title and primarily we work for student services but there are some of us that are distributed to different areas. So, we have one of our advisors who focuses on working with student athletes and one in one of the more career technical areas, so different specializations.

Mine is working with students in our adult basic skills areas which includes English as a second language, adult basic ed, GED, and then developmental writing, the word 90 classes. I work with those students who are students who are in the ESL and GED programs who are getting close to finishing those programs and starting to think about transitioning to college course. For example, when a student starts taking their GED class, there are four of them to take and they usually don't take them all at once, some do, but when they start taking them and are feeling pretty confident that they

are going to pass them then we start talking about what their next step is. So, if all they needed was their GED, their fine, their good to go, they just needed it for their job or whatever, that's great. But if they are thinking about changing careers or jobs, or a career path, need some training, I just help them with that process and what that looks like and how to fund that. How to find finances, financial options to help pay for that.

**Q: What are some unique issues that those kinds of students run into?**

**A:** It's all over the board. It really depends on the student. There are some students who might be more traditional high school age and for whatever reason high school just didn't work out for them and they just come to do their GED and they've got a path and they know what their doing and that's fine. Or high school just wasn't for them and they do their GED but they have no path and so to help them figure out what is their next step. We actually have a lot of students who are in that 16-17-year-old range and that's kind of a challenge to fit them into the programs that will fund students of their age or that's kind of an appropriate path for them to go down. Other students, their all over age wise, what's happening in their life. A big factor is confidence, often. That's often why they've never come back or why they've started and stopped, started and stopped and are trying again. Which is great that they are trying again. So, trying to help them build that confidence that they can move forward. Once they finish their GED it's like yes, you can actually do college classes and help them move forward at that. Finances are often an option. One of the programs I work with we have a grant funded program for students



Joan Jagodnik worked for a variety of colleges in the Portland Metro area including Portland State University and Marylhurst University before returning to CCC.

who are receiving SNAP benefits, the old food stamps benefit to help pay for some classes, to help pay for transportation, books, and those other things that are hard to fund sometimes.

**Q: What's a unique issues younger student would face? Someone who isn't of college age?**

**A:** Often, it's the not really knowing what they want to do yet. Trying to find some exploratory classes that they can take. Depending on what their history is, whether work is a realistic option, finding

a living wage. It can really depend on what their home situation is like, whether they have a stable home situation or not.

**Q: If you could give one piece of advice to every student, what would it be?**

**A:** Come and talk to me. Don't be afraid to ask questions and get some direction. There are a lot of people here to help and can get you on that right path. We don't always have the bandwidth to reach out to every student but if you reach out to us we will definitely be there.