

Students study for citizenship

STORY BY KAI TINKER

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Clackamas Community College has what may be the least known about, but for some students, the most important course they may ever take. This course is a citizenship workshop, dedicated to helping students achieve their goal of becoming a United States citizen.

Well it isn't a course in the traditional sense, according to Michelle Culley, the volunteer literacy coordinator at CCC.

"We offer a free citizenship workshop taught by volunteer tutors rather than a class," said Culley over email. "We never have had enough participants to offer it as a class. Also, the students often have different needs and different proficiencies of English, so the workshop format allows us to customize the curriculum term by term."

"In general, we assist a student in studying for the reading, writing, speaking and civics portion of the citizenship exam. We provide the students with all the study materials they need and no-cost copies of the N-400 application. We do not offer any legal advice or information."

The aspiring citizen will be asked 10 questions out of a list of 100. Some of the questions are simple, such as, "Name one right or freedom from the First Amendment" or "Who vetoes bills?" Others however, are complicated questions that even some

citizens could struggle to answer, such as, "Name a writer of the Federalist Papers."

To qualify for citizenship, the following are some of the requirements according to the USCIS:

Be at least 18 years old at the time you file Form N-400, Application for Naturalization. Be a permanent resident for at least 5 years. Demonstrate continuous residence in the United States for at least 5 years immediately before the date you file Form N-400. Show that you have been physically present in the United States for at least 30 months out of the 5 years immediately before the date you file Form N-400.

This is a small portion of the rather significant requirements.

Eventually, I was able to meet up with Culley and Sandy Svatos, the tutor of the workshop. Alongside them were three students, two from Mexico and one from Jordan, all women who shared one major similarity. They were all married to a United States citizen.

Svatos said, "The course is announced at the beginning of each term. It's really hard to get that information out; we find it's good just to go face to face with students."

Culley said one of the hardships in applying for citizenship: "It's really expensive. To get your

citizenship, it's almost \$800 and it's actually going up sometime this year. Most likely, by quite a bit. I think it's going to be around \$1,100 or \$1,200."

The students explained their motives behind pursuing citizenship.

"Because [of] the nice life in America with my family," said the student from Jordan. "I have three daughters and my husband. I need to citizenship because they live here." She went on to say that "[America] is a nice place and has lots of benefits."

It's nice to have a reminder of the hope this country can inspire, and that's something worth celebrating.



PHOTO BY JORDY VILLAGOMEZ

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